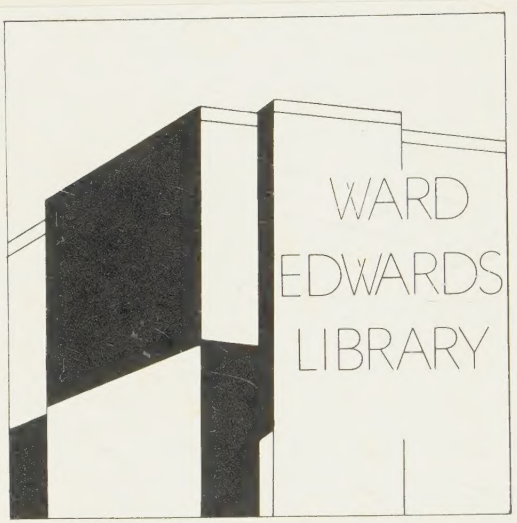

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AT THE FOOT OF THE ROCKIES

AT THE FOOT OF THE ROCKIES

BY

ABBIE CARTER GOODLOE

Short Story Index Reprint Series

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To

MAJOR AND MRS. ALBERT ROSS CUTHBERT

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To the Reader:

It was at Calgary on a June morning, hot with the sudden, fierce heat of a Canadian summer, that we reluctantly abandoned the comfortable sleeper of the great C. P. R., which had borne us westward so many hundred miles from Montreal, for the day coach of the rocking, jerky little "accommodation" train that runs leisurely twice a week southward to Fort Macleod.

There we left behind us for good all such modern conveniences as railroads, and started in the inspector's government trap straight westward—thirty-five miles over the prairie, the Rockies always before us, dazzlingly white in the brilliant afternoon sun, and in the clear air seemingly so close that one could make out every purple hollow and the ridges of fresh-fallen snow on the slopes, like the marks left on a sandy beach when the tide runs out.

TO THE READER

Sundown found us at our destination, the Mounted Police detachment, where we were to spend the summer—a summer that passed all too quickly while we studied and enjoyed a little section of the great Northwest Territories, and caught kaleidoscopic views of the strange, interesting, ever-shifting life of the country.

The tales in this book reflect some of the phases of that life which we saw about us in that isolated little Police detachment in Alberta, and which was, in miniature, the life of the whole vast country. For there were to be found the three factors which make life in the Territories what it is: the British soldier, the Indian, and the settler.

It is impossible to get away from the Indian in western Canada, especially at a military post. He is, in fact, the *raison d'être* of the post itself. The Indian is there, consequently the British soldier is there. It is part of the policy with which England has always followed up her conquests or her colonizations—the policy of placing on the spot a gentle but firm reminder that she has her eye on things, and that treaties and promises may not be

broken with impunity. The discipline of that magnificent constabulary force we found maintained in all its integrity at the foot of the Rockies, and the "eyes r-right" and "attention" were as grim at our little Spitze detachment as at Aldershot, and the men as well uniformed and as efficient as though under the eyes of General Lord Roberts himself.

And then there was the settler—usually the young English rancher, for, of course, northwest Canada is not only an excellent place to send wild younger sons, spendthrifts, and profligate young gentlemen whose families are sick of being beggared and disgraced by them at home, but is a fresh and remunerative field for hosts of big young Britishers who wish to start life for themselves, and who find England a trifle small. The land is full of them, and we enjoyed them and their polo matches and gymkhana races and house-parties immensely.

From the Indian, the soldier, and the young rancher we learned much during the short, fierce Canadian summer, both by hearsay and observation. Tales we wrested from them—enough to

fill a dozen volumes such as this. But perhaps most of all did we love to listen to a man—a Catholic priest—who is known from Quebec to Vancouver, who has spent fifty years of his life among the Indians, who had enough influence with them to alone prevent the whole Blackfoot nation from joining Riel's forces, who speaks a dozen different dialects of their language, and who knows more of their customs, traditions, and history than any man living.

Not until the snow fell did we turn our faces eastward. Reluctantly did we realize that all was over—that for us, at least, there were to be no more house-parties, or Indian tea-dances, or Dominion Day festivities, or taletelling in the long, soft twilights, when the purple air hung over the level land, and the white moon swung across the heavens, and there came from far off the faintly heard gallop of some bronco as his rider urged him across the prairie, and the breath of the *chinook* as it sprang up and bore abroad the odor of the wolf-willow and the wild rose and forget-me-not.

C. G.

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AT THE FOOT OF THE ROCKIES

I

RIVERS' GYMKHANA

IT was Dominion Day and the "Civilians" were in a state of mind bordering on desperation. Their much talked-of gymkhana and house-party in celebration of the day were on and Rivers had not put in an appearance. Rivers was their crack rider, and was to win at least three of the eight events for them and reduce the "Ranchers," the Civilians' guests, to nothingness. He had sent an Indian runner down from his camp in the Rockies three days before to say that he would surely be back in time for the house-party and to have the Kid, the best polo pony in Alberta, and the rest of his horses and his riding things sent over to wait for him at the ranche. But Hilliard and Campbell were very despondent. It was their house-

party—at least it was being given at their ranche although the Civilians' polo team, of which they were two important members, were sharing the expenses—and they were anxious to have things go off well and to amuse their eighty invited guests. To have things go off well Rivers was a necessity.

The Civilians, it may be explained, were a set of very fast riders and polo players recruited from among the young English ranchers whose places were anywhere from ten to twenty miles out of Calgary. They were called the Civilians in contradistinction to the "Military," the famous Calgary polo team, whose members were the officers of the Mounted Police force stationed there, and their intimacy with that celebrated organization and their remarkable success had caused them to become proud and exclusive and to look down condescendingly upon the Ranchers, who came from southern Alberta and were poor and unknown to fame.

The Ranchers themselves were quite hopeless. They had not had the advantage of the Military as pacemakers, and they told themselves that, with

superior horses, more assurance, and more practice the Civilians were sure to win, and they felt in their hearts that they were doing a daring and reckless thing when they accepted the Civilians' challenge to compete in riding and polo with them.

The programme for Dominion Day was anything in the morning and a gymkhana and polo races in the afternoon with the members of the Civilians' and the Ranchers' teams for riders. The next day was to be given over to a polo match and the Civilians were as disagreeably confident of the polo as they were of the gymkhana. Rivers was booked to do the best riding for them, Milvain for the Ranchers. Rivers was also the most brilliant polo player the Civilians had, and they assured themselves that after they had walked off with all the gymkhana and racing prizes he would win the game for them.

Rivers was not popular, but he was to be depended upon when it came to riding. No one knew exactly why he was so unpopular unless it was because he was so very moral and fussily particular and careful of his clothes—ordered from England

—in a country where to be good is to be conspicuous, and to be particular about anything is rather superfluous, and correctness of attire seems absurd. Perhaps the greatest reason for his unpopularity was his strange and inexplicable habit of total abstinence. In the Northwest Territory a man who never takes a drink is about as rare and unwelcome a sight as a Bengal tiger on Fifth Avenue would be, and is looked upon with mistrust and suspicion. That fact and his immaculate clothes and his monocle and his dignified airs made him seem uncomfortably superior, and there were people wicked enough to wish to see his fall. But in the meantime no one could deny that he rode well, and so his non-appearance was making Hilliard and Campbell and the rest of the Civilians anxious and fretful. He had gone up into the Rockies with only two Blood Indians for guides and a young boy as runner three weeks before. It was another curious and reprehensible habit of Rivers' to go off on such solitary expeditions, and when he went off in that way it was extremely difficult to tell just when and how he was coming back.

"He's probably out of condition," growled Hilliard. "I'll bet you a pony he hasn't been in a saddle since he left here."

"Yes," added Campbell, mournfully, "and he has probably been tramping miles every day and sleeping out every night getting himself stiff and useless, and he has probably forgotten what a hurdle or a polo ball looks like. Rivers is too confoundedly conceited. He thinks he can treat himself any way and still ride."

They shook their heads mournfully and consulted their watches. It was two o'clock and the gymkhana was to begin promptly in half an hour and Campbell and Hilliard as hosts had still several hundred things to attend to, so there was no more time to be spent in mourning the unlucky absence of Rivers.

"I suppose I'll have to put in young Rodney in his place," said Hilliard, turning away, "but he can't ride to beat Milvain and his ponies are not winners." He threw himself on his horse and cantered off to the polo grounds to see how things were getting on.

The field stretched out three hundred yards one way and a hundred and fifty the other over a level piece of green prairie where the grass had been mowed and cut until only a little short, hard fuzz of it stuck up, and over which the white polo ball rolled like an ivory sphere over a billiard-table. From the boundaries fluttered little red and white pennants, and at one end a union jack floated from a big flag-staff. Extending all round the edge of the polo field was the dusty race-track, which had been ploughed and rolled and beaten as smooth as the Civilians and their numerous friends and helpers could make it. Beyond the track on one of the long sides of the oval the ground rose gently, forming a sort of natural terrace from which the spectators could get an admirable view of the racing.

Opposite this bench of land the prairie stretched out level toward the shack five hundred yards away. On this piece of ground were the two big dressing-tents of the teams with the union jacks fluttering from them, and long hitching-posts and an enclosure for the ponies. Hilliard found the place already crowded with Indian boys

leading the ponies to be run, around and around, and there were half-breeds on bucking broncos looking over the horses deciding which would be the winners, and cowboys dashing backward and forward, and here and there one of the Civilians or the Ranchers examining bridles and saddles or stooping down to feel hocks and ankles.

Over on the other side of the track the crowd was beginning to collect. The eighty guests of the house-party had ridden or driven over, and about half the Mounted Police in Calgary had turned out —the Civilians were so sure of victory that they had invited the barracks *en masse*—and the scarlet tunics were flashing in and out of the crowd. Besides these there were at least five hundred people out from Calgary, ladies with gay parasols, and dresses from which fluttered streamers of white and red ribbon, the colors of the Civilians; and men in white khaki riding-trousers and shiny boots. Traps of all sorts and horses and dogs and children lined the sides of the track and stretched up the rising ground. At one end of the race-track thirty lodges of Stōny Indians had stationed them-

selves, the young braves lounging up and down in shirts and blankets that dazzled the eyesight when the sun struck them, while the chiefs leaned over the wooden barrier surveying the scene, and the squaws crouched at their feet. A hundred of their ponies grazed peacefully back of them and wandered unheeded among the papooses and travoies and tepee-poles.

Hilliard skirted the crowd on his pony and dashed up to the Civilians' big wall tent. The scene inside was not one of calm. Martingales and stirrups and spurs and racing-saddles were lying around or being picked up hastily and carried out, and along the side of the tent were propped the hurdles of pine boughs and the helmets with tissue-paper ribbons on them for the stick-and-helmet contest, and the long lances for tent-pegging, and men were dashing around and adjusting each other's sashes and pricking their fingers and swearing and calling for aid and soda-water.

Hilliard went over to Rodney, who was trying to pick out a particular bridle from a leathery tangle of them lying in one corner of the tent.

"You'll have to get into your riding things quick," he said. "We'll be ready for you in ten minutes. You will have to take Rivers' place—he hasn't come——"

"Oh, yes, he has," replied the boy, disconsolately. "This Indian here has just seen him. He says Rivers left the camp yesterday morning and has ridden like mad to get here. He's over at the shack and will be here in a minute."

Hilliard made a dash for the door and collided gracefully with Rivers, who was diving in head foremost.

"Here, what are you doing?" demanded Rivers, crossly. "I'm tired and hot enough without being banged around by you like a tennis ball."

"Don't talk!" replied Hilliard, savagely. "You've nearly given us heart disease! Your things are over there in that kit-bag and you will have to be in them in seven minutes and out on the track for the half-mile dash."

"Where's the programme of events?" demanded Rivers, hazily. "How was I to know that the dash comes first?"

Hilliard thrust the paper into his hands and watched Rivers narrowly as the latter read out the list in a queer, tired voice. His face was white with patches of red that came and went curiously. He looked pretty well exhausted Hilliard thought.

GYMKHANA

"The Ranchers" "The Civilians"

Dominion Day

1. Half-Mile Dash.
2. Tandem Race.
3. Ladies' Nomination Race.
4. Half-Mile Hurdle (over four jumps).
5. Tent-Pegging.
6. Stick-and-Helmet Contest.
7. Saddling Race.
8. Bucket and Ball.

Fifty-Cent sweepstakes.

For genuine polo ponies 14.1 and under. To be owned and ridden by members of "The Ranchers' " and "The Civilians' " Polo Clubs.

T. R. HILLIARD, Sec'y Gymkhana.

Rivers sniffed scornfully as he finished reading.

"Just tell one of those Indian boys to take out Gold Dollar and I'll be ready to win that—" He

plumped down heavily on the floor of the tent and held on to his head. "I feel awfully seedy, Hilliard," he said. "Thirty-five miles' riding in this blazing sun isn't good medicine. Send for some ice-water for me, will you, while I dress?" He went over to his kit-bag and began dragging out his khaki riding-trousers.

"Ice-water! Fiddlesticks! What you need is a little whiskey to set you up. You're as tired as death."

Hilliard bustled around to get the whiskey, all the while regarding Rivers out of the corner of his eye to see how he had taken his suggestion. Rivers was shaking his head mournfully and irresolutely.

"You know I never drink," he said, in reproachful tones.

"Nonsense! See here, Rivers," expostulated Hilliard, excitedly, "you're completely done up and you can't ride a little bit in the state you are, and you know we've matched you against Milvain to win this race, and we are depending on you and Gold Dollar to do it, and it isn't quite fair to us, it seems to me"—judicially—"not to take something that will make you feel fit. It's only so much medicine for

you." He stood before Rivers with a glass which contained an innocent-looking amber-colored mixture in which bits of ice clinked soothingly and refreshingly.

"If you put it that way," began Rivers, doubtfully, "if you think it isn't fair to you——"

"Of course it isn't fair to us," interrupted Hilliard, severely. "Just you drink this off while I fasten your sash on." He handed the glass to Rivers, who still regarded it doubtfully.

"Haven't tasted whiskey since I was a little fellow eight years old when I was ill with typhoid fever," he murmured, meditatively.

Hilliard laughed. "If I hadn't had any for that length of time I'd pray to have typhoid again."

Rivers gave one more look and then drank off the mixture. He felt the quick warm rush of blood through his body and a sudden strength in his tired limbs and a return of courage.

"All right," he said, turning to go. "I feel better already."

They threw themselves on two ponies and cantered over to the race-track where the starter was

impatiently regarding his watch and Gold Dollar and Flash, Milvain's pony, were being led up and down.

The Civilians and the Ranchers hung over the enclosure breathlessly as they watched their respective representatives mount, and bets, which, until the last moment, had hung fire, were quickly closed, and all sorts of remarks and predictions were made and the excitement waxed intense. There was only one other race of more interest than the half-mile dash and that was the half-mile hurdles over four jumps, and only the thought that they would want money to back Rivers for the hurdles prevented the proud Civilians from betting their last cent on him for the first race.

They started out very prettily, the horses acting well and getting off at the second pistol-shot. At the first turn Rivers was already in the lead, Milvain following him up closely. Gold Dollar was going as easily as you please and the Civilians wore a confident, "told-you-so" smile which was most exasperating to the anxious Ranchers. Down the long side of the oval they went. Flash was

stretching out finely, but Gold Dollar still held the lead, his burnished, coppery coat glistening in the sun as he thundered along. Suddenly at the second turn there was a thump, and a cry from the crowd and a cloud of dust which, when it cleared, revealed Milvain half way down the stretch and Gold Dollar, riderless, straggling in some twenty yards behind, with Rivers tearing along on foot in hot pursuit of him. His face was purple and his white khaki trousers and patent-leather boots covered with dust. The Civilians rubbed their eyes, and when they took in the situation, even the loss of their money and honor could not keep them from joining in the howl of laughter that went up from the jubilant and astonished Ranchers. Rivers, breathless, angry and hot, said he could not explain his tumble at all, and that all he knew was that his head felt queer and he would go over to the dressing-tent and keep quiet until it was time for the half-mile hurdles. There were to be two events in between and Rivers thought he would be all right by the time the hurdle race was called. Campbell rather sarcastically said he hoped so and

told his cowboys to go along with him and see if he needed anything.

On the way over to the tent Rivers had time to think over the race, and as his anger cooled remorse began to trouble him. He reproached himself with having made his friends lose a great deal of money on his account, not to mention having given the first race to the Ranchers. He told himself moodily that in all probability he would not have been able to stick on Gold Dollar at the first turn if he had not taken the whiskey Hilliard fixed for him, and he determined to try to get himself in condition to win that fourth event.

When he reached the tent he stretched himself out on a pile of buffalo-robes in one corner to rest and told the cowboy to mix him a little whiskey with a great deal of ice and water. The cowboy, not knowing of Rivers' abstemious habits, and judging after his kind, translated his order as meaning five fingers of the strongest Scotch to be obtained, with a teaspoonful of water and a small lump of ice in it. Rivers thought there seemed to be a great deal of the mixture and that it was very strong, but

reasoned that in his exhausted state he was no judge of the matter, and probably needed all he could get, and so lay back on the rugs and sipped manfully at it.

As the liquid slowly coursed its way through his tired body a feeling of grand content stole over Rivers. He looked out from underneath the lifted flap of the tent entrance, and the crowd and race-track and bunches of ponies in the distance assumed magnificent and rosy proportions. Nothing seemed easier to him than to win the next race, and he wondered vaguely how on earth he had come to lose the last one. The shouts and applause he heard seemed as if they must be meant for him, and he pictured to himself how the crowd would rise up and yell itself hoarse when he came in first over the hurdles. All the tired feeling had evaporated and in its place he felt a light-hearted courage which made him want to get right up and go out and whip everything in sight and win all the races and fight the Ranchers in a body.

When they came for him a little later he found it slightly more difficult to get up than he had im-

agined it would be, and the wind—or something—made the walls of the tent sway queerly, and he felt a strange desire to tie his head on his body. But he kept all these observations to himself and went out as quickly as he could and got on his horse with the help of the cowboy.

It may have been only the natural effect of inundating a system completely unused to alcoholic stimulants with a large glass full of strong whiskey, or the sun may have had something to do with precipitating the result, or Rivers' previously fatigued state may have made him particularly susceptible, but at any rate by the time he reached the race-track Rivers was most exceedingly drunk. Only he did not know it, and owing to his monocle and proper clothes and the jaunty air with which he rode, nobody else knew it. So he was allowed to enter the race with Hilliard and two Ranchers, Mackenzie and Milvain. Rivers rode Mascot, who could jump anything from a hurdle to a hay-rick, and the Civilians, noting Rivers' devil-may-care expression, plucked up fresh courage and began betting on him again.

They started off at a terrific pace, Rivers again leading. There was a recklessness and dash about his riding that pleased the Civilians mightily and made the Ranchers cast disconsolate looks after their two men. The first hurdle was one hundred yards from the start-off and fifty yards before the first turn, so that the approach was easy. Mascot went at it as if he had been shot out of a catapult and rose in the air like a rocket. Rivers was so far ahead that no one could see how he swayed and bent over as the horse came down, and on they went, round the first turn for a hundred yards to the next hurdle.

Rivers was talking to his horse. "That's easy," he was saying, sagely. "It's only two hundred and ten feet high, Mascot, and it's got to be done. Just you go at it, old boy, and don't mind me. I'll stick on some way. Now I come to think of it, I wish I had just got Campbell to tie me on—but it's all right. Jump!" The horse rose and again Rivers clasped his neck lovingly as he came down. He felt a little shaken.

"That's all right, Mascot," he said, reassuring-

ly. "Two hundred and ten feet's a big jump—I thought you never were coming down, old fellow, but here we are and only twenty more like that. Seems to me you're going mighty fast. Don't see anyone ahead of us. It isn't polite, Mascot, to go off this way and leave your guests. There are two strangers here, Milvain and Mackenzie. They come from down south and they aren't much for riders but we ought to be polite—we ought to wait for 'em. Whoa!"

The horrified Civilians in the distance suddenly saw Rivers pulling Mascot's head off. They rubbed their field-glasses and assured themselves that their sight was failing, but there was no mistake. Rivers was pulling in and was looking back and smiling cordially at the riders behind him. As he slackened his speed Milvain, who had been a close second, shot past him, followed by Hilliard, who gave one agonized and surprised glance at Rivers. Then Mackenzie tore past, and Rivers, amazed and indignant, saw his overtures of politeness repulsed without so much as a word of thanks or glance of recognition and himself left behind.

"Not a grain of politeness—not a grain," he murmured sadly to Mascot. "No self-respecting horse—man, I mean—can stand this. What'll we do—what'll we do?" He meditated for a moment as he urged Mascot into a gentle canter, and then a howl of hysterical laughter went up from the crowd of spectators as they saw Rivers deliberately take his feet out of the stirrups and screw himself gently around in his saddle until his back was turned to the horse's head and the other fast-vanishing riders, and his heels dangled gracefully over Mascot's flanks. As they hit the astonished horse at every stride he increased his pace until he was going at a gait which was reducing the distance between himself and Mackenzie very rapidly.

The next hurdle was only twenty yards before the home turn, and was considered the hardest because of the good riding which had to be done immediately after the hurdle had been taken. The crowd held its breath as Mascot, with his *insouciant* rider, tore up to the barrier. For the twentieth part of a second the horse paused as he got to the hurdle, and then with a graceful, cat-like spring

jumped straight up and over as neatly and cleanly as if he had been endowed with flying power. Rivers jumped, too—some ten feet in the air apparently—and when he lit again on Mascot it was only to start on a toboggan-like slide off his back and tail, with his feet sticking stiffly straight out before him, and acting as a sort of plough when he struck the dusty ground.

When they got to him, expecting to find his neck broken, they discovered him sitting in a cloud of dust, screwing in his monocle and wagging his head sadly.

"Not a grain of politeness," he was saying as they came up. "My! my! to think that they call themselves gentlemen—and I waited for 'em and they paid no attention—where's my horse?" he demanded. "Where's Mascot? *He's* a gentleman."

He got up uncertainly and somebody dusted his back and somebody else his front, and a cowboy made a dive at his boots with a saddle-cloth, and Hilliard resettled his cap which was hanging on by a hair, the visor turned down over the back of his neck and making him look something like a

longshoreman gone wrong. He started off valiantly for the judge's stand, his rescuers following behind and choking with dust and laughter. An Indian boy was holding Mascot. Rivers threw an arm around the pony's neck, and, crossing one foot over the other for greater safety, he stood leaning up against him and surveying the crowd scornfully.

Campbell came up behind him softly.

"You've got to go away, Rivers," he said, firmly —"you're awfully screwed—tight, you know."

Rivers turned sadly to his horse.

"He says I'm tight," he confided, mournfully, to Mascot. "Tight?" he went on to Campbell, "tight? It's my boots that are tight—take 'em off. No—it's Mascot's boots that are tight. Poor old horse! They are so tight that he couldn't run," he explained to the crowd which had come down off the hill-side and had gathered around Rivers interestedly. He caught up Mascot's forefoot and commenced to pull at the shoe. Hilliard grabbed his arm.

"I say, Rivers," he began, desperately, "you're

drunk, you know—you've got to come right along and get out of this."

Rivers leaned his aching head on Mascot's neck and burst into tears.

"Oh, the ingratitude of man!" he moaned. "Drunk! I, who never drink. Why, I haven't taken whiskey since I was a little chap eight years old dying of typhoid. Oh, the baseness of humankind to accuse me of being drunk, and before ladies." He threw out an arm toward them and smiled and bowed after the manner of a gay Lothario tempered with Chesterfieldian politeness and the patience of Job, and then he turned with a pained expression toward Hilliard. "Take me away—insult me—do anything you want, but I'm goin' to explain," he went on, threateningly, shaking a forefinger at the crowd. "If I'm drunk, it's Hilliard that made me drunk—" Hilliard seized him forcibly from behind.

"Here! be quiet, will you? You're drunk as you can be and you've lost us the race and you've got to go to that tent and stay there until you're sobered down."

Rivers hoisted himself tenderly and carefully into the saddle.

"Drunk!" he said, wonderingly and sadly, to those about him. "Drunk? Lost 'em the races! Why, it's because they don't know anything that they are losers!" Here he stood up in his stirrups and waved a hand to the convulsed crowd.

" A word to the wise as to races.
Don't bet on a horse to get places,
Or that he will win, or even come in,
If you don't know his name,
Nor if he is game,
Nor his record, nor jockey, nor paces."

After this exquisite improvisation he plumped heavily down in his saddle and an escort closed up about him, and the next Rivers knew was that he was being marched to the dressing-tent and Hillard and Campbell were alternately pouring invective and advice in his ears.

"Well, you certainly made an ass of yourself this time——"

"And you've got to stay in this tent and not move until we tell you to——"

"Well, it's a lesson to me about giving a teaspoonful of whiskey to a grown baby! Why, I suppose another teaspoonful would have killed you!"

Rivers was wobbling his head about sadly and putting in remarks about the ingratitude of friends and the uncertainty of life. They left him in a corner of the tent after having made him swear to stay there, and went back to the track.

For a while Rivers did stay quiet, and little by little his high courage sank and queer pains began to shoot through his head, and life and Dominion Day races did not look as rosy as they had, and his suddenly highly expanded imagination collapsed and became blank and dreary. He reasoned wearily in his tired brain that he ought, purely out of consideration for the Civilians, to revive his drooping spirits, and he looked around for the Scotch. He found it under a kit-bag where the cowboy had thoughtfully tucked it, and reflecting that he was now very much used to whiskey and that only a large dose would have any effect, he poured himself off another half glass. Things began to look up again in a few minutes, and Rivers perched

himself happily before the entrance of the tent and propped his head on his up-drawn knees and contemplated life grandly and contentedly.

But it came over him as he sat there that a man of his intellect and known ability as a rider ought not to be idly stopping in a dressing-tent when his services were so needed on the field of battle. He argued that he had been but a foolish man to promise to stay there, and he stood up and watched the progress of events from afar with growing indignation and self-pity. He could have wept aloud at the thought of his exile. As he looked, Rivers saw them making preparations for the stick-and-helmet event. Four Ranchers and four Civilians, holding short clubs and wearing masks and helmets, from the top of which streamed long narrow ribbons of tissue-paper, mounted their ponies and cantered out to the centre of the polo ground. The crowd surged after them and formed a ring around them.

The contest began and the blows fell thick and fast on the helmeted heads. Rivers contemplated the scene and wept a few more tears, and then he

suddenly turned round and went back into the tent, and snatching up a helmet and a stick he dashed out and threw himself on Mascot, who had been left tied to the post near the tent. Craftily and slowly as an Indian he threaded his way through the crowd until he was near the edge of it, when he gave Mascot a touch and pranced out into the open, brandishing his club and calling on the horrified Civilians to come on. He waltzed his pony over to a Rancher and almost laid that gentleman's head open with a whack of his club which sent his tissue-paper flying. Rivers nearly rolled off hsi horse with laughter. He laid about him in every direction; his pony trod on all the other ponies and rammed his quarters into the other ponies' ribs and pushed and shoved until the nine men and their horses were one kicking, laughing, cursing tangle.

It was a marvel how he rode. There was no fear of his falling off now. He hung on like an Indian and tore up and down and wound himself in and out and doubled and twisted like a snake. When they tried to get near him to catch him he thumped and knocked and banged them until the tears rolled out

of his eyes with laughter and he choked with the dust Mascot kicked up. Hilliard and Campbell were purple with rage and the exertion and disgrace. The sight of the Ranchers and their friends doubled up in an agony of laughing drove them almost to madness. They raced around imploring their exhausted friends to close up on Rivers and either kill him or club him into quietness. Somebody finally did get near enough to give him a little tap with his stick, and he rolled off his horse and was promptly pounced upon by four infuriated Civilians. They bore him from the field, two holding on to his kicking riding-boots and two at his shoulders, and as they wearily marched off they consulted among themselves as to what was to be done.

Campbell was for giving him cyanide of potassium, but someone said that after all he had relatives. And then Hilliard struck out a plan. He said that he felt very much to blame as he had first induced Rivers to take the whiskey and he proposed to simply make him drunker, to give him so much whiskey that he wouldn't know his left hand from his right for a week; to make him drunker than

ever yet man was drunk, and to bind him to the tent and leave him there for the rest of the afternoon while they went back and tried to retrieve the fallen fortunes of the Civilians.

They took him into the tent and they propped him up on the buffalo-robes. Someone bathed the cut on his head while somebody else got out the bottle of Scotch. And then they all sat around in a ring and glared at him and gave him things to drink. They gave him strange, icy drinks and they gave him hot, sizzling mixtures that burnt his tongue and made the tears come into his eyes, and they gave him plain cold decoctions, and when one got tired of mixing drinks for Rivers another took his place.

And he drank them all. He took all they gave him and thanked them. He said that he retracted what he had said about the ingratitude of friends and that he loved them all as though they were his brothers. Campbell said he thought Rivers must have the constitution of a nickel-plated steam-engine. But Hilliard thought it only the natural result of not having drunk anything since he was

eight years old. And while they sat about him and discussed his marvellous capacity for liquids, Rivers still drank and babbled on and it began to look as if he might be going to keep them there for the rest of the afternoon.

But after a while he remarked, with much indistinctness of accent, that he was very tired and that he thought it must be time to go to bed, and he turned over with his face to the side of the tent, and the Civilians saw, to their unspeakable happiness, that Rivers was off. And when he was quite fast asleep they tied him down carefully. They moored him to the tent-pegs with bits of bridles and they wound stout pieces of rope around his ankles and they made a rampart of kit-bags and saddles about him and they left him sleeping sweetly. They went back to their friends with stern and set faces and they told them that Rivers was "fixed" and wouldn't bother anyone, they thought, for several days.

A physician profoundly versed in the effects of alcoholic stimulants on the human organism may be able to explain scientifically Rivers' case. All I

know is that instead of sleeping for hours as men in his condition have been known to do since the beginning of drunkenness, Rivers awoke in three-quarters of an hour. He reasoned in his magnificent intellect that having been asleep it must be the next day and time for the polo match, and he wanted war—war in its worst form. The thirst for combat was strong upon him, and his sole desire was to go forth and distinguish or extinguish himself. Polo was a tame sort of affair to a man feeling as he did, but he determined to kill all the other polo players if possible and split the ball open and knock down the goal-posts, and he thought that perhaps that would do for a while. When he tried to get up and found himself very securely anchored to the tent his grief and indignation were Homeric. But nothing could have held Rivers just then, so he pulled up two tent-pegs and kicked one foot loose from the rope around his ankles and overturning the saddles and kit-bags, arose unsteadily and cautiously and looked delightedly upon the wreck he had made.

"Fools! fools!" he murmured. "Think a man'll

lie there! I'll show 'em. Rivers'll play polo—gool polo. I've goll somebody else's head, an' it doesn't fit!" He wandered uncertainly over to a basin of water and stuck his head in it cautiously. "Ill doesn't come off. Gool head—gool head!" He made a dive at a towel hanging near and mopped his dripping hair. And then he pranced around the tent making dashes at polo mallets and sashes and balls. Sometimes when he was unusually lucky he succeeded in capturing one of the desired articles.

An Indian boy passed the tent and looked in. Rivers drew himself up with an effort at sobriety.

"Bring round the Kid in five minutes," he commanded. The boy disappeared and Rivers continued his erratic preparations for the combat. In exactly five minutes the Indian boy, who knew the Kid, as did every man, woman, and child in Alberta, reappeared leading the pony bridled and saddled.

The Kid, as has been said, was the most famous polo pony in Alberta and had the distinction of looking like no other pony on earth. He resembled most nearly a delightful Noah's Ark animal. He

was sawed off and square, and his little short brown body had the color and appearance of painted wood, and his ears stuck up pointed and stiff as the toy ones do. He was eighteen years old and played polo better than he did when he was three —and he was a wonder then. No other pony could touch him when it came to a straightaway gallop after a ball or a quick turn to get in a drive. Rivers loved him as his life, and as he threw himself into the saddle he felt that he and the Kid would get away with the whole of the Ranchers' polo team and not leave enough of them to tell the tale.

There never was a funnier sight on the Civilians' or any other polo grounds than that vision of the Kid tearing across the open with his quick, jerky stride and Rivers on his back—Rivers minus a collar, his sash slung across his shoulders so that the bow stood straight out in the back, a cap riding far back on his head and stray pieces of rope dragging from one ankle and his left wrist.

They shot across the prairie and were on the polo ground and in the centre of it before the bewildered spectators and the agonized Civilians

fairly realized it. Up and down the field they raced, Rivers calling aloud on his friends to come to him and help him exterminate the Ranchers, and the Kid wild with excitement at losing the ball. Never in his life before had he missed the ball, but look where he would he could see none. In his efforts to find it his nose almost grazed the ground, and then he would almost break his short little neck as he threw up his head to see if it could be in the air. He chased and raced, galloped and turned, while Rivers on his back made magnificent imaginary drives from one goal-post to the other, standing up in his stirrups and hitting with both hands. It seemed to Rivers that he had never played so well and his denunciations of those who would not come and help him were terrific and far-reaching.

Finally, when they had sufficiently realized the situation, they did come to him. They came to him in a body and armed with hastily caught-up polo mallets and riding-whips and clubs of all sorts. They followed him up and down, racing their ponies off their legs while Rivers brandished his

polo stick, hitting out right and left, and the Kid turned and doubled on his pursuers, and the crowd roared with laughter. Women were giving little screams of hysterical amusement, and the Stonies, down at the far end of the track, were shouting like mad. Men were rolling on the ground convulsed with laughter and the officers were straining the frogs on their tunics as they bent double over their troopers' necks.

From one end of the field to the other there was a continual roar, above which one could now and then distinguish Rivers' voice calling aloud to know the score and the thud, thud of the ponies as they tore about every way and the clash of conflicting mallets.

The Kid, true to his record, kept far ahead of all the other ponies and would have been perfectly happy if he could have once caught sight of the ball. They chased him and tried to close in on him and he wriggled out of places that only a rat would have dreamed of trying to get through, and he spun round on spots no larger than a dinner-plate, and the Civilians and their friends perspired and

grew desperate and their horses almost dropped with fatigue.

At the end of half an hour when the Kid was looking as fresh as though he had just left his stable and the pursuers had almost given up hope of ever catching him, Rivers broke his mallet and headed for the barrier to get another. The others headed there, too. They closed up all around him gradually and stealthily and at a safe distance. They had plenty of time for their manœuvres because Rivers was insisting that time ought to be called and that the game had to stop while he gave the Kid a drink. There was murder in the hearts of the Civilians as they watched the pride of their polo team and their best gentleman rider lovingly put his arms around a Noah's Ark pony and endeavor to empty a bottle of Scotch whiskey down its throat. They didn't kill him there, though. They just took him away—as quietly as he would allow—and no one asked any questions out of respect for the Civilians' lacerated feelings.

Rivers wasn't seen for a long while. It was given out that he had gone to British Columbia to in-

spect some mines. There must have been a good deal of inspection needed, for he stayed there three months.

The Civilians declared the polo match off for the next day, and the Ranchers went home jubilant over "Rivers' Gymkhana," as they called it. Rivers himself does not call it that way. He never refers to it at all.

II

JACK

JACK was seated in a most precarious position on the top of a small yellow wagon, and was lashing out furiously at her *ponokomitax* with a wooden-handled, two-thonged cuert which she had just got from a Piegan Indian in exchange for a blue-silk handkerchief.

Her cayuses were two chairs securely strapped to the wagon with various parts of her bridle, the light-yellow one, with both arms missing, representing to her lively imagination a fine buckskin steed; the other, which had originally been a respectable piece of walnut furniture, but had apparently stood the stress of much bad weather, until it had assumed a mottled, degraded aspect, doing duty as a vicious, unmanageable pinto.

Jack and her spirited team were drawn up comfortably in the parallelogram of shade before the shack, and from time to time, during her imagi-

nary race over a prairie infested with hostile Indians, she would let fly an arrow from the bow which was her latest treasure, shriek out delightedly and blood-thirstily, "Another Indian bites the dust!" and then fall to lashing her steeds more furiously than ever in her attempt to escape her pursuers.

There may be misguided people who think that a little girl only seven and a half years old and of exceptionally aristocratic lineage should have been engaged in more ladylike pursuits—playing with dolls, for example. It is true that Jack had dolls, but she never played with them. Ignorant and unthinking but kindly relatives in England had sent her dolls from time to time—dolls with beautiful flaxen hair and languishing violet-blue eyes—but they were all carefully put away, and were regarded by Jack with either unconcealed contempt or perfect indifference. Jack was not that kind of little girl. She was as straight and lithe and active as a boy, and her big gray eyes looked out curiously and fearlessly from a tangle of short, dark-brown hair on a world all level prairie, and towering

Rockies, and Indians, and orderlies in scarlet tunics, and ponies, and government traps, and Lee-Metford rifles. Her baptismal names were Jacqueline Alberta Marjoribanks. She had been offered up, when too young to protest, at the altar of her ancestors, and had been basely imposed upon and made to bear the names of people who were absolutely unknown and uninteresting to her. No one stopped to consider that because her mother's grandmother had been a noted French beauty—Mlle. Jacqueline d'Erlinot—that was no very good reason for naming after her a helpless English infant, who was certainly no beauty at that early period of her career. They simply told the officiating clergyman, and he poured a silver goblet of water over her convulsed countenance and inexorably announced that her name was Jacqueline. Her mother, having thus established a claim for her side of the family, gave her to her husband, and Captain Eviston put in a counter-claim for his family by annexing "Marjoribanks" to "Jacqueline." "Alberta" was a joint concession to the reigning family. This magnificent profusion of names was

reduced in daily practice to "Jack," a most happy and appropriate name for her. Life was too short and exciting in that little out-of-the-way corner of the Canadian Northwest Territory to waste time in bestowing majestic appellations on anyone.

The *garçon manqué* effect about Jack impressed everyone. She could ride as straight and almost as far as her father, never rising to the trot to ease her tired little bones, but sitting proudly and firmly in her boy's saddle; and she had a way of cantering wildly and carelessly down hills, and of urging her fourteen-hand pony, Nellie, across swift little mountain-streams, and up and down impassable trails, that was decidedly masculine, and caused the grown-ups with her to shudder as they followed unwillingly. Broken toys had no place in her existence, but a lame pony was a calamity of moment, and to be obliged to go in the trap instead of being allowed to ride her bronco when her father went on one of his forty-mile drives to an outlying detachment was one of the greatest sorrows that life held for her.

She observed certain proprieties in her riding which were rather puzzling. Although she loved her boy's saddle to the utter exclusion of even the most fascinating of pigskin side-saddles, yet she scorned to be seen riding in knickerbockers. They were, usually, modestly hidden under a full kilt of blue serge. That fact, however, did not prevent her appearing at any time in a pair of gorgeous buckskin shaps, embroidered up the sides and adorned with innumerable ermine skins. There seemed to be a subtle difference between knickerbockers and shaps that appealed to Jack.

Jack knew a great many things that older people were ignorant of. She possessed a fund of miscellaneous information, and there was an odd sort of reliability and steadiness about her that struck one as quite wonderful, and grown-up people were continually startling themselves by discovering that they were talking to her and consulting her as if she were as old as themselves. It seemed quite natural for Jack to know that common bluing was better than lime for a saddle gall, although one would not ordinarily expect children of her age to

have ideas on such a subject; and no one seemed to think it was asking a great deal of her to suggest casually that she should go forth on her pony, bareback, and scour the surrounding prairie for the riding-horses, and drive them into the corral. She was also allowed to go back and forth to Highwood, the nearest village, quite alone, and entirely unchecked by the fact that she was almost certain to encounter wild cattle and roving Indians. Indeed, Indians were her special delight. She had numberless friends among them, and had picked up a colloquial knowledge of the Blackfoot language, and was always flatteringly interested in pony races and horse-swapping expeditions.

The Indians, on their side, were gravely polite to Jack, and would say "How!" impressively when they met on the trail; and they would offer to let her ride their tricky little ponies while they waited to see the inspector, and would applaud her pluck and laugh delightedly when she would fearlessly mount one and go bucking and plunging about the enclosure. Unless such good times were summarily cut short by the appearance of her mother on the

veranda, Jack would enjoy herself hugely, and would ask innumerable questions of the Indians, and inform herself thoroughly as to the movements of the different tribes: just when the Stonies would come to trade with the Piegans, and when the Kootenais might be expected to visit the Bloods at the reservation, and other kindred topics of burning interest.

The Piegan scout and the half-breed interpreter of the post were special friends, and usually acted as umpires in any bargaining difficulties. As scarcely a day passed that she did not add to her store of Indian treasures by exchanging penknives and sashes and ribbons for porcupine head-dresses and fire-pouches and charms, their services were often in demand. The disappearance of various articles of civilized and luxurious childish apparel simultaneously with the appearance of evil-smelling Indian trophies was the cause of much woe to Mrs. Eviston.

"What can Jack want with them?" she would ask her husband, plaintively. "I can't go around the corner of the shack but I see some dreadful-

looking Indian hanging over the enclosure and dangling an embroidered belt or a coup-stick or a bead charm before Jack, who seems perfectly fascinated with the horrid things. And how she ever makes them understand passes my comprehension. But she seems to talk their impossible language quite intelligibly, and it is really very convenient when they come around with berries and things, and Doyle happens to be away. But I wish she would study her arithmetic."

Doyle was the orderly, and a cockney of the deepest dye, who, in spite of his difficulties with his own language, had managed to pick up a very fair acquaintance with the Blood and Piegan dialects of the Blackfoot tongue.

"But she really ought to be punished," Mrs. Eviston would continue, sadly, shaking her head. "She is getting too big to go tearing over the country with Jim [the interpreter] or Many Feathers [the scout]. And really, Arthur, you *must* get her a side-saddle the next time you go east; she is getting outrageously bow-legged."

"Oh, nonsense!" the captain would object amia-

bly. "She isn't eight yet, and she's more like a boy than a girl, anyway, and I won't have her spoiled. There'll be plenty of time for her to get delicate and young-ladylike and silly, and her toes will turn out all right when we have to send her east to school;" and he sighed as he thought of the years of separation before them.

So Jack continued her evil ways, and rode, and talked Blackfoot as of yore, and gathered together so much Indian paraphernalia that one day she got herself up in full costume—head-dress, shaps, bow and arrow, moccasins, and all—and frightened her mother almost to death by appearing suddenly and noiselessly before her and demanding in Piegan unlimited *sixikimmi skoonataps* and *napaien*. Mrs. Eviston said, "Goodness gracious!" and then alternately kissed and shook Jack, and when she had sufficiently admired her, called Captain Eviston from his study to come out and see "the little Indian brave."

After that triumph Jack grew more unmanageable than ever, and consorted more and more with irresistible Indians, who seemed to be forever dash-

ing up to the inspector's quarters on endless pretexts, and was known and adored of them far and wide.

After a while Jack got tired of shooting imaginary Indians with arrows which *would* fall out in the hot sunshine beyond the shadow of the shack, and even the most spirited of wooden pintos and buckskins pall quickly on one accustomed to the real thing. The times seemed out of joint to Jack. She wondered disgustedly what she should do to amuse herself. She had already tried the house, but her mother was very busy entertaining several ladies who had driven up in two traps early in the morning, and her father had the men of the party in his study, where Jack astutely guessed that they were drinking cool things and smoking, so that no one had paid much attention to her. She had been very anxious to know what was happening, and where her mother, who was pinning on a sailor hat securely, was going, and had unhesitatingly inquired. She noticed with surprise that the ladies stopped talking and arranging their veils and hats,

as if in some embarrassment, and that even her mother was evidently confused.

"We're just going for a long drive, dear," she said, rummaging in her drawer for more hatpins, and not looking at Jack, "and you must be a good little girl this afternoon and not get into any mischief, and——"

Jack turned on her little heel and marched proudly to the door. If her mother did not want to tell her where she was going, and did not want her along, that was all right, but she did not want any pretending.

So she played with her bronco and pinto and murderous Indians, but somehow they seemed uninteresting. After a while she sat down dejectedly on the door-step of the shack and looked out over the hot prairie.

"There doesn't seem nuffin' for a little girl to do," she soliloquized, mournfully. "It's awfully hot to ride, but I would 'a' gone on Nellie and not taken up the least little bit of room in the trap." She looked across to the far side of the enclosure, where she could just make out, in the dim coolness of the

stables, Doyle rubbing down the horses for the trap. Jack would have liked most tremendously to go over and sit down in the door of the stables, and talk to the orderly, and offer advice on the currying of horses. But there was a coolness existing between Jack and Doyle—a coolness occasioned the day before by Jack's having laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks at the sight of the orderly being gracefully bucked clear over the head of an unmanageable little buckskin pony which he had recklessly bought of a horse-trading Kootenai. That was the worst about Jack—people got angry with her or liked her or held her responsible as if she were quite grown. Doyle could not have felt more offended if one of his brother privates had made fun of him.

This unfortunate event had been followed by another peace-destroying episode. Jack was struck with a sudden desire to see how Nellie would look with a real trooper saddle on her, so she had borrowed Doyle's—without mentioning it—and just as she was in the act of mounting, Doyle came upon her. Unfortunately for Jack, Nellie's girths

were several inches smaller than the trooper's, and so it happened that when Jack seized the pommel to climb, the saddle turned gracefully under the pony, and Jack came down with a most unnecessarily hard thump to the ground; and when she opened her eyes after an interval of dazed consciousness, she looked upon Doyle standing grimly surveying the scene. Their relations for eighteen hours had been very strained.

So Jack went disconsolately into the shack and tried to amuse herself by putting on every bit of Indian toggery she possessed, and when she had finished she would have passed muster very successfully as a little Indian boy. But there was no one to see her, and, as most women know, dressing up for one's self is not a very exhilarating performance. So she seated herself again on the step of the shack and looked longingly over at Doyle. Doyle was a man—he was any man, it was true, but he was better than nothing—and so Jack determined to put her pride in her pocket and go over and dazzle Doyle.

She marched straight over to the stables. Her

soft moccasins made no sound on the hot prairie grass, and Doyle started perceptibly when he saw the strange apparition in the shadow of the doorway, and heard a thin, small voice with an accent of forced indifference remark:

"Hello, Doyle! How does Jim like his rubbin' this mornin'?"

"Hm!" grunted Doyle, dusting Jim so violently that that patient animal wheeled about in indignation and pulled viciously at his halter. "Scarin' the 'oss!" exclaimed Doyle.

Jack seated herself calmly just inside the door, in the shade, and out of reach of Jim's heels.

"You've left a little tiny speck of mud on his hock."

Doyle made a surreptitious dash at it with his vulcanite scraper under cover of the dusting-cloth.

"Hit'll be more than 'is 'ock as will 'ave mud on hit when 'e gets back," he grumbled, forebodingly.

Jack curled herself up comfortably and surveyed the strange horses in the stalls.

"It's like a sort o' party to-day," she ventured. "Where's everybody goin', Doyle?"

"You're so clever, I thought you'd 'a' knowed," remarked Doyle, sarcastically.

"Seems like nobody'll tell a little girl," said Jack, plaintively and craftily. "I thought *you* would tell me."

Doyle was mollified.

"Well, I don't just know meself, an' p'r'aps I oughtn't to tell any'ow," he remarked, illogically, as he led Jim into his stall and tied him. "There! heat your hoats; you'll need 'em," he said, jocosely, to the horse, giving him a friendly slap on the flank. He went into the next box and untied the other team horse. "Come along, Bill, an' get yerself made pretty. You're goin' to carry two ladies an' the hinspector this hafternoon. Well, as I was sayin' "—to Jack—"I don't just know meself, but I think we're all goin' to see some barbarous Hindian celebration—some dance or other."

Jack sat up very straight and interested. So it was a party going to see an Indian dance, and *she* could not go. The iron sank into her very soul.

"Hit's the worst of all their murderin' dances, Many Feathers says," pursued Doyle, complacently

scratching away at Bill, "an' I suspect hit'll turn me stummick an' make me wish I'd never come to this 'eathen country. Hit's the sun dance, an' by the looks of the sun," he went on, turning a blinking eye for an instant on that luminary, "they'll only 'ave to provide the dance—there's plenty of the other thing."

Jack stifled a groan. She was a blood-thirsty little pagan. To miss the worst Indian dance was too much.

"But don't you go an' tell, young 'un," went on Doyle, impressively. "I believe hit's a kind of secret, because the hinspector hisn't rightly supposed to know about this dance, an' if they didn't tell you hit's because they didn't want you to know."

Jack's lip trembled.

"Don't you think I can go, Doyle?"

Doyle shook his head doubtfully. In spite of Jack's cruel behavior of the day before, he felt very sorry for her. In his heart he admired her and thought her the pluckiest little girl in the world, and that it was a piece of unmerited hard luck that

she should not have been a boy, and he usually treated her as a comrade and an equal.

"I hain't got no horders to that heffect," he said, kindly, "an' I say, young 'un, hit'll be much too 'orrid a sight for a little girl, an', besides, hit's too far for you to go; hit's nineteen miles from 'ere if hit's a foot, an' there hain't no room in the trap for you."

Jack turned scornfully upon the orderly.

"As if I couldn't go on Nellie!" she exclaimed, indignantly. "Where's it goin' to be, Doyle?"

Doyle began to loosen Bill's halter.

"Oh, nineteen miles down the trail to Macleod," he said, carelessly; "just this side of the creek, to the north a bit, up past Lecouvreur's. There's a big level piece of prairie just off the trail, with a lot of cotton-woods all haround it."

Jack got up softly and meditatively, and went out into the sunshine, leaving Doyle to rub down the strange horses and harness the traps by himself.

It was about an hour later, after an early luncheon and much iced lemonade had been disposed of—

lemons are a luxury in Alberta—that the men and the women emerged from the inspector's quarters and stood waiting on the veranda for the carriages. Doyle, looking spick and span in a new scarlet tunic, "bill-box," and pipe-clayed gloves, sighted them from the stables, and precipitating himself into the government trap, drove proudly up. Captain Eviston caught the reins, and stood waiting with a foot on the hub of the near fore wheel and a rather worried expression on his face, while Doyle raced back to the stables for the other teams. Every now and then the captain gently flecked his riding-boot with the whip and glanced absently and anxiously at the women, who were talking and laughing rather nervously together. It suddenly struck him that there were a great many of them and only four men besides the orderly. His wife and a young cousin of hers, Miss Kenwood, from Montreal, who was seeing the great Northwest Territories for the first time, were going in his trap with him, with Doyle to drive. In the next trap was Carlington, the owner of the largest ranche in Alberta, his wife, and her two nieces, the

Hon. Adelaide and the Hon. Beatrice Pembroke, typical English girls, just over from London, and anxious to see everything there was to be seen. Their brother, the Hon. Hugh, was in the last trap with Stirling, a young Scotch Canadian, his pretty American wife, and her young sister, Miss Page, who was spending the summer with her.

Captain Eviston stopped whipping his boot and took to pulling his mustache.

"You know you really ought not to be going," he said, hesitatingly, as the English girls climbed into the trap. "I think I am doing wrong in taking you, or even in going myself——"

Mrs. Eviston interrupted him hastily.

"Now, Arthur, don't have any death-bed repentance! We've decided to go, and if we faint away or the new braves eat us up, or anything else disagreeable happens, we will not blame you."

Miss Kenwood looked up anxiously.

"You don't think it will be so *very* dreadful?" she asked.

Captain Eviston nodded his head decidedly.

"It will be very dreadful indeed," he said, briefly. "I am quite sure you women have no idea what is before you. There may be trouble, too. It isn't too late even now to decide not to go——"

There was a little feminine chorus of protestation and disappointment. Pembroke and Carlington left their traps, and came over to hear what Eviston was saying.

"What! not go now?"

"It's this way, Pembroke," went on Captain Eviston, turning to the disappointed-looking youth, with a worried frown on his face. "You know the agents on nearly every reservation in this country have stopped the sun-dance, and only the Lord and the powers that be at Ottawa and Regina know why orders haven't been sent to these Indians not to hold theirs this year. In fact, I strongly suspect that orders are on the way now, and this sudden setting forward of the date by the Indians was done only to get ahead of the authorities. As it is, this dance will probably be the last one held anywhere around here, and naturally the Indians are all angry about it. There will be an unusual number

of candidates to be made braves, and I am very much afraid that it will be a very sickening sight, and possibly—" He stopped and looked expressively at Stirling, who had joined the group.

"Too late now, Eviston," said Stirling, laughing. "You ought to have said all this to Mrs. Eviston before she invited us."

Miss Page leaned forward in her trap and laughed excitedly.

"I wouldn't miss it for anything!" she exclaimed. "What ignominy to go back to the States and say you hadn't seen a sun-dance! And the fact that it is to be the last one only makes it the more interesting. Captain Eviston, I shall tell everyone that you were *afraid* if you don't take us."

Captain Eviston laughed a little ruefully. "That wouldn't be quite untrue," he remarked quietly. "But the less you say about me in this matter the better. Shall we go or stay?"

"Oh, I say, Eviston," exclaimed Pembroke, "really it will be too bad, you know, not to see it! All you've said has only made us the more anxious to go."

The Hon. Adelaide put up a handkerchief and wiped away an imaginary tear.

"I don't see why it isn't all right," she protested. "You haven't received any orders to stop this dance, so you are *dans votre droit!*"

Carlington moved over nearer to the officer and tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"You mean there may be trouble?" he asked, in an undertone.

Captain Eviston frowned. "Yes," he said, shortly. "That is, of course it's very unlikely, but one never knows what the Piegans are up to in these infernal, howling dances of theirs, and I am quite sure we shall be the only whites there; this sudden change of dates has thrown the authorities off their guard. We are probably the only people besides the Indians themselves who know that the dance is to be held to-day. Oh, bother! it's all right, I suppose," he added. "I'm getting as cranky and nervous as a woman." He looked at the others waiting expectantly. "We'll go," he said, grimly. "You seem determined to see this sun-dance, so I take it there is nothing more to be said."

He jumped lightly into the trap beside Doyle, who gathered up the reins with an odd expression on his sunburnt face.

As they drove out of the enclosure, Mrs. Eviston stood up in the trap and looked on every side for Jack.

"I wonder where she can be, Arthur?" she inquired, anxiously. "I haven't seen her for ever so long. I meant to tell her that she must not go out riding on Nellie this afternoon, but stay with Rafferty. I'm afraid I didn't tell her good-by, either, poor little chap." She sighed a little. "Well, she always knows how to amuse herself, and that's a mercy, but we will have to be very careful and not talk of the sun-dance before her. She will be terribly disappointed to have missed anything like this. Really, though, I suppose it's no sight for a child, eh, Arthur?"

Captain Eviston's shoulders gave an expressive shrug, but he ventured no remark.

The reason that Mrs. Eviston could not obtain a view of Jack was a very simple one. That young lady was at the farthest end of the pasture, behind

a big cotton-wood, with a pail of oats in one hand and a halter grasped firmly in the other, enticing Nellie, who was somewhat shy of the sumptuous Indian toggery, to come nearer and let herself be caught.

A good team of government horses with a fairly light trap to draw over prairie-land will trot ten miles an hour without once changing gait or speed, and as regularly as clock-work. So Captain Eviston knew without consulting his watch that it was just one o'clock when Doyle turned the horses up the creek past Lecouvreur's, and he saw before him a level stretch of land with cotton-woods surrounding it on three sides, and the open approach from the creek swarming with Indians and ponies. As the traps threaded their way slowly through the moving mass, the Indians fell back on each side, scowling and muttering at sight of the officer's black and the private's red tunic.

In the middle of the clear ground was a circular lodge at least ninety feet in diameter, the sides formed of poles twenty feet tall, set near together

and interlaced with boughs of cotton-wood and pine, held in place here and there by leather thongs. The roof, which slanted upward, was formed in much the same way, the cross-poles all converging at the centre and fastened to the tall central lodge-pole. The boughs which were strewn thick over the roof stopped at about four feet from the top of the lodge, leaving a circular open space through which the sun beat fiercely.

Doyle halted the horses on the edge of the clear space in front of this lodge and waited for orders. Captain Eviston swung himself down from the trap and looked narrowly at the group of Indians about him as he waited for the others to come up. Pembroke was the first.

"I say, we are in great luck. Plenty of time. It doesn't seem to have commenced yet," he shouted.

The inspector nodded.

"All right—so far," he added, under his breath.

Miss Page jumped lightly down from her seat in the trap and came over to him.

"Isn't this perfect!" she exclaimed, breathing quickly in her excitement. "Think of missing *this!*

How awfully picturesque they are in their paint and feathers! I wish I had brought my camera."

"Perhaps it's just as well you didn't," remarked Captain Eviston, coolly. "There was a man torn to pieces down near Medicine Hat last year for photographing some Indians who did not happen to want to be photographed. It's all very well if they come and ask you to do it, but I wouldn't photograph them *en masse* and when they are wrought up at a dance, unless I was especially requested to do so."

"Where shall we leave the traps, Eviston?" demanded Carlington, coming up.

Captain Eviston looked about him quickly.

"Doyle will put them in that grove," he said, indicating a small alley of trees near the entrance to the lodge. "But," he added, turning to the orderly, "you will not stay with them, but come with us." He beckoned to an Indian leaning against a little buckskin pony and regarding him disapprovingly. "Doyle," he said, "tell that Indian, Black Tongue, to get us places in the lodge if possible."

Black Tongue was a notoriously bad Piegan,

and had been up twice before Captain Eviston for horse-stealing; but there was not another Indian in sight that the inspector knew by name, and, besides, he thought that Black Tongue, remembering his experiences in the guard-room, would be inclined to be obliging. Black Tongue came forward reluctantly.

"How!" he said, in a surly tone.

Doyle waved aside any such politenesses.

"*Napiake, assopotsists, puskan,*" he said largely and disconnectedly, with a sweep of his arm toward the women.

The Indian threw out his hands with an almost Gallic gesture of impotence, but moved softly and quickly across the grass to where an old Indian, evidently his chief, stood talking to a group of young braves. The older man listened intently to the few quick words Black Tongue poured into his ear, and turning to where Captain Eviston and his party stood, bowed gravely and motioned them toward the lodge. Black Tongue preceded them swiftly, and led them to places on the far side of the tepee and directly facing the entrance, from

where they commanded a view of the whole interior. Captain Eviston mentally noted, with a shrug of disgust, that when the lodge was filled they would be in the very centre of the mass of Indians and as far as possible from the only exit. For the time being there were only about thirty or forty Indians sitting about. They took very little notice of the white visitors, and either moved noiselessly about, looking up from time to time at the flood of sunlight streaming through the opening in the top of the lodge, or else sat quite still, seemingly plunged in a stupor. The air was oppressively hot, and but for the tepid, pungent odor distilled from the pine boughs would have been unbearable. Outside and from a distance came intermittently the monotonous sound of a tomtom. Through the chinks in the lattice-work of boughs could be seen indistinctly the restless, moving groups of Indians and ponies.

The Hon. Beatrice gave a nervous little laugh.

"I can't stand much more of this," she whispered to Mrs. Carlington. "If something doesn't happen soon I shall run away through sheer nervousness."

Captain Eviston leaned forward toward the ladies.

"I think it will be better for us not to laugh or look amused, or alarmed, at anything that may happen," he said. "You know it's rather cheeky our being here; we haven't been urged to come, and I don't think we would care especially about having *them* come to our weddings or funerals, or whatever corresponds in seriousness among us to this dance of theirs, and so we had better be as quiet as possible."

Miss Page shot an amused glance at Pembroke over Eviston's bent head. It struck her that this English officer was most particularly fussy and nervous beneath his calm exterior. Miss Kenwood looked alarmed.

"I don't believe I like this at all," she sighed. "Either my eyesight is deceiving me or there are at least five thousand blood-thirsty-looking Indians out on the prairie; and it's awfully warm and stuffy in here, and I wish I were back at the detachment."

Stirling chuckled noiselessly.

"Not more than five hundred, I should say, Miss Kenwood. However, five hundred Indians are equal to five thousand ordinary men when it comes to tomahawking and scalping, you know," he concluded, cheerfully.

Mrs. Stirling put her hand over her husband's mouth.

"Don't jest about such horrid things, please," she said.

There was another long wait, and the sun beat down more fiercely than ever, and the guttural murmur from the groups of Indians scattered over the open space of ground grew louder and more excited, and the sound of cayuses plunging and galloping about came nearer and fiercer. They had been waiting fully three-quarters of an hour when suddenly the Indians nearest the lodge fell back and seemed to shift themselves into kaleidoscopic figures of brilliant hues, and there rose a soft patter of moccasined feet that beat time restlessly to the quick throbs of a tomtom borne by an Indian who came slowly down a hill a little to the right.

He was dressed most gorgeously in painted buck-

skin shaps and crimson-flannel shirt, over which were hung innumerable relics—long plaits of hair beaded at the top and fitted into little leather sockets, the claw of an eagle, and a necklace of vivid blue grass beads. On his head was a beautiful coronet of many-colored porcupine quills that rippled in the hot air, and from the centre of which rose an eagle's feather tipped with narrow scarlet ribbon. Across his forehead extended a broad yellow band of paint. A knee-rattle dangled against his side and jingled as he stepped lightly, raising each foot very high and bending the knee as a horse does in parking. Behind him streamed a throng of painted, fantastically dressed Indians.

Suddenly the Indians nearest the leader burst into a wild, high song that hung quivering and shrill on the hot air and then dropped suddenly to a low key, only to break forth terrifically again on the high note. With the beginning of the song a sort of agitation passed through the mass of Indians, and every moccasined foot was raised and brought down with a double stamp upon the hot, dry grass, which crackled and twisted under the blows. As the

heaving, flashing procession neared the lodge, a dozen medicine men emerged from the group nearest the entrance, and joined the chiefs, who walked behind the musicians. Although the day was intensely hot with the short, fierce heat of the Canadian summer, the medicine-men wore long robes of fur that almost completely enveloped them, and from out of which their pallid faces appeared glistening with great drops of perspiration. Around the neck or carried in the hand was the medicine-bag.

At the door of the lodge, each Indian threw up his head for an instant as if for a last look at the sun before entering. The leader took his stand near the central lodge-pole, in the full blaze of the sunlight, which streamed through the opening, and continued beating furiously upon his tomtom, while the Indians seethed past him in their endeavors to get places from which to see the dance well. As they closed about Captain Eviston's party the women shrank back rigidly from contact with the supple, dark-hued bodies. After a little, a narrow space was left free about the group, and they

breathed more easily, and leaned forward with pale, expectant faces.

Of the five hundred Indians fully three hundred crowded into the lodge, the rest massing themselves at the entrance and around the sides wherever they could see. In the centre of the lodge, about the pole, was left an open circular space, around which the chiefs and medicine-men ranged themselves. Back of these were massed the young Indians and squaws.

Suddenly there was a lull. The slender sticks fell from the hands of the Indian with the tomtom, the beating feet were still, and there was a moment of almost perfect silence. Then from the group of medicine-men one rose up, and advancing to the centre of the lodge, raised his eyes to the blaze of light and addressed an invocation to the sun. As he spoke, the muscles of his face twitched, his lips became ashy, and his eyes wavered in their intent gaze. The words seemed to fall involuntarily from his lips. Suddenly he flung up his hands toward the sky, and reeling, fell backward among the other medicine-men, who, wrapped in a sort of trance,

took very little notice of him. The silence that followed lasted for only a moment.

Then out of the mass of motionless figures there emerged at different points three young Indians, tall and magnificently formed. Beneath the clear, dark skin, which had been oiled and rubbed until it glistened like burnished copper and stretched like rubber, one could see the play of the powerful muscles.

Pembroke leaned over to Eviston.

"Gad!" he said, excitedly. "Look at the tallest chap. Look at those muscles over the shoulders and in the back. If he had been a Trinity College man last year, I rather think we'd have won."

"He's my favorite," put in Carlington; "I'll back him to see the dance through. I've seen him before; his name is White Eagle, and he's a fine Indian."

"They all look game," remarked Stirling; "they must be the pick of the tribe. The one with the red brow-band looks wicked, though. I rather hope the torture will be a little too much for him."

The three Indians were moving noiselessly

around the ring, keeping perfect time with one another as they raised and lowered the foot with a double blow on the ground, showing their intense excitement only by their flashing eyes and the quick, nervous movement of their limbs. Six medicine-men arose slowly, two approaching each of the three Indians. They stood for a moment muttering some incantation, and then motioned the young Indians to lie down on the ground. They then stationed themselves on the right and the left of each, and began gently to rub the heaving chests. It was like the even, practised work of a good masseur, only there was no varying of the stroke or position. The spot on each breast that they kneaded and rubbed could not have been larger than a silver dollar. As they worked, the Indian with the tomtom began to beat again, but very softly, and there ran a subdued, sympathetic murmur through the crowd. From out on the prairie one could hear now and then the short, fierce whinny of a bronco, and the sun beat down on the pine boughs more hotly than ever, and they gave forth a faint, refreshing odor.

Captain Eviston turned uneasily to the women.

"You'll be awfully sorry you came in about a minute," he remarked. "Perhaps you had better not look——"

He might as well have spoken to stone walls. The eyes of the girls were fastened on the prostrate Indians as though held there by a magnet, and their breath came in quick, uneven gasps. They did not even hear him. So he turned again to look, and as he did so he saw the medicine-men draw from their bags sharp little knives like scalpels, and make two parallel incisions in each benumbed breast. Not a drop of blood issued from the wounds, and the sinews thus laid bare were drawn out carefully and skilfully, and short pieces of wood passed beneath them, to each end of which a lariat was tied. The medicine-men then took each Indian by the shoulders and helped him to his feet.

As the young Indians stood upright, facing the excited, restless throng, they gave one triumphant, scornful look about, and then moved forward until each had taken up a position beneath a cross-beam, and about equally distant from one another. So far

they did not seem to be at all affected by the torture, except that the pupils of their eyes had contracted to pin-points, and there was a peculiar rigidity about their limbs. They were the picture of proud unconcern while the lariats were being thrown over the cross-beams and fastened there, and they put the shrill little whistles, which they were to blow while they danced, to their mouths with as much indifference as though they had been cigarettes.

When all was ready, and the medicine-men had stepped back, suddenly the tomtoms burst out with a terrific rattle; the young Indians began to dance back and forth at the ends of their lariats, with long, sweeping lunges, as though they would quickly tear the sinews from their breasts; the whistles shrieked, the masses of Indians broke into a wild shouting, and the medicine-men, lifting up their hands, prayed aloud to the Great Manitou.

A sort of frenzy seemed to communicate itself to every Indian in the lodge. Their faces turned ashy, and their muscles quivered as if they were undergoing some intense physical strain. The restless

heels beat the ground in double throbs that shook the whole tepee. The swarthy faces, which an hour before had been only vacantly good-natured or sullen or stoical, were now full of passion and wildness. An Indian beside Miss Page sprang into the air as though some devil within him had broken loose. The young girl shrank back faintly toward Pembroke, who was slightly behind her. The men had put the women in the centre, and were trying to protect them from the crowd of Indians pressing in on all sides; but it was quite impossible to make them keep back or appeal to them in any way.

"This is awful; it must be worse than a prize-fight," the young girl said, with an unsteady little smile at the Englishman.

Pembroke smiled back sympathetically and looked over at his sisters anxiously. Being English girls, they were taking things calmly, though there was a hot spot of red in each cheek, and their blue eyes looked almost black from the intensity of their excitement.

Suddenly the Indian "candidate" nearest them dropped his whistle, and with a low groan fell for-

ward on his face in a dead faint. His attendant medicine-men sprang forward, released the lariats, and pulling the thongs from the sinews, spit upon his chest, rubbing the wounds, and murmuring incantations over him. After a long time he slowly opened his eyes. When full consciousness returned to him and he realized that he had failed in the ordeal, he sprang to his feet in a frenzy of disappointment and rage. As his eyes fell upon the little group of white people opposite him, a wilder gleam of anger lighted up his face, and pointing a shaking finger at them, he shrieked out some imprecation. As he staggered backward, the medicine-men grappled with him and bore him panting and shouting from the ring.

Captain Eviston turned to Doyle.

"What did that Indian say, Doyle?" he asked, quietly.

The orderly was tugging at his gloves and looking very uncomfortable.

"'E says we 'ave given 'im 'bad medicine,' sir, an' that 'e his goin' to get a Blood Indian conjurer 'e knows to make us all cripples."

"Stay by us and translate all they say," commanded the officer, calmly.

Throughout this episode the tomtoms and shoutings had not ceased for a moment, nor had the other two dancers stopped an instant in their frantic attempts to break their sinews and so be proclaimed "braves." They leaped and swung from side to side, keeping time with the beat of the drum, while the musicians sang "The Song of the Brave":

I sing, I sing under the centre of the sky,
Under the centre of the sky;
Under the centre of the sky I sing,
Under the centre of the sky.

The birds of the brave take flight around the sky,
A flight around the sky;
The birds of the brave take a flight, take a flight,
The birds of the brave take a flight.

The spirits on high repeat my name,
Repeat my name;
The spirits on high, the spirits on high,
Repeat my name.

First one set of musicians would sing, and then another set would take up the words, like the an-

tiphonal chorus of a cathedral choir, while the two dancers swung staggeringly around the open space, now forward as if walking uphill, now sinking and slipping backward as the earth reeled under their trembling limbs. The sweat was running down their rigid bodies like rain, and their sinews were pulling far out from the panting chests and snapping back again in a horrible way, as the agony made them give to the lariats.

Miss Kenwood covered her face with her handkerchief and began to cry softly. The men moved restlessly and cast anxious glances at one another and the women. Stirling put an arm around his wife.

"I suppose it's impossible to get out of this," he ventured.

Captain Eviston shook his head.

"Quite impossible," he returned, grimly.

He had hardly spoken when, with a cry of mingled fear and rage, the evil-looking Indian with the red brow-band bounded forward from the other side of the opening and held up the broken ends of his lariat. The rope had parted—the worst medi-

cine that could happen to an Indian. The medicine-men, terror-stricken, sank to their knees, but the young brave stood up defiantly, although he reeled from faintness. Staggering across the open space with his broken lariat dragging after him, he paused on the edge of the circle, just below the little party of whites, and turning his back to them, he began to harangue the Indians.

He looked like some devil as he stood there, his wicked face bedaubed with paint and showing ghastly, even under the red, with agony and wild rage, his bloodshot eyes rolling from side to side, his breast crimson with the blood that now flowed freely from the lacerated flesh, and the quivering nostrils and upper lip telling even better than his words the wrath that alone was keeping his trembling limbs from sinking under him. His voice, in spite of his faintness, was strong enough to make itself heard above the din by those nearest him.

"I, Yellow Wolf, am brave and fearless," he shouted: "I do not fear death or any kind of torture; but who can prevail against evil powers that come no one knows whence? Our medicine-men are

powerful, and they have propitiated the Manitou of the Indian, but they had not thought to propitiate the Manitou of the white man. Why is the white man here? Why is our lodge invaded, our dance made public? Why are the children of the White Mother permitted to come thus among us? Have we lost all freedom, all courage? Did they not exercise an evil influence over the Beaver, who lies fallen and helpless, he who was so strong—" The words died away in an unintelligible murmur as he fell, half-fainting, to the ground.

"What does he say, Doyle?" demanded Captain Eviston, once more.

Doyle, looking more unhappy than ever, translated freely, shifting himself uneasily from one foot to the other.

"'E says, sir, that we 'ave 'oodooed 'im, same as the other Hindian, an' that we houghtn't to be 'ere."

Captain Eviston looked thoughtfully before him a moment, regretting most keenly the feeling of delicacy which had prompted him to come unarmed to the dance. He had thought that such a course

would appeal to the Indians. Unfortunately, they had apparently not noticed or appreciated that piece of refined sentiment. He aroused himself from his little revery to find the eyes of all the Indians in the tepee fixed scowlingly or threateningly upon him and his guests. There was a suppressed excitement and antagonism about them which would have been sufficiently unpleasant if he had been there with fifty good privates at his back. As it was, the absolute hopelessness of his situation made him perfectly cool. Four men and an orderly with seven women to take care of could not hope to contend successfully against five hundred maddened Indians.

While Yellow Wolf still lay moaning and struggling on the ground, an old chief seated near him, and who had heard what he had said, arose, and spreading out his hands toward him, began to speak soothingly, as if to a child.

Captain Eviston recognized him as Pretty Feathers, one of the friendliest and most sagacious of the Piegans.

"My son," said the old man, softly, "arise; be

comforted. Cease thy complaints—the complaints of a child who knows not how to take punishment. Why shouldst thou think the Manitou of the white man has interfered with thy destiny? Has the Manitou of the Indian never visited thee before with his displeasure?" He turned to the rest of the Indians, who were listening, and, raising his voice, cried: "Yellow Wolf has spoken words of foolishness in his anger. Let us forget them, as he will forget them, and"—significantly—"as the white man will forget them."

There was a murmur of disapprobation as he seated himself, but many of the Indians looked less aggressive, and many once more turned their attention to the circle where the last Indian, White Eagle, still danced. He was almost spent, and the quavering, faint notes of his whistle told how little breath and life were still in him. His face was gray-white, and a light froth flecked his lips. His body was covered with blood and great drops of perspiration, and his lower limbs, which had at first been unnaturally rigid, now bent and twisted and doubled under him as he leaped back and forth. It

was evident that unless the sinews soon burst he would faint from pain and loss of blood, and all his agony would count for nothing.

Suddenly a young and pretty squaw sprang up from the mass of Indian women crouching near the edge of the circle, and forcing her way frantically through them, rushed forward with a terrible cry, and throwing herself with all the strength of her young body against White Eagle, forced him back until the sinews of his chest snapped like whip-cords, and with a groan he toppled over backward.

Immediately the medicine-men sprang forward to him, the musicians set up a yell of triumph, and every Indian in the tepee began to shout at the top of his lungs. The terrifying noise was at its height when suddenly another squaw walked forward to the centre of the bridge until she stood directly beneath the opening. Behind her came four medicine-men bearing upon a buffalo-robe an Indian who seemed to be dying. His pallid face, as they laid him in the sunshine, took on a more ghastly hue. The closed eyelids quivered an instant, but could not open.

At sight of the dying man the frenzied Indians ceased howling, and, in the silence which followed, the Indian woman, standing motionless, the blazing sun beating down on her bare head and uplifted face and hands, began a mournful sort of chant or invocation to the sun, and a prayer for the restoration of her husband to health. When she ceased speaking she sank down beside the man, but still held her eyes turned to the light. Yellow Wolf crawled over to her and whispered fiercely in her ear for an instant. A look of terror and despair settled on her face, and she turned her eyes for an instant on the white women, who, with pale and drawn faces, were watching her. Yellow Wolf sprang up with all the strength that was left in him, and facing the Indians, cried: "Do you think the Great Father will hear her or you while these evil spirits are with us? I tell you, Great Hawk will die. Do you hear?" he screamed. "Great Hawk will die, and if he does, it is the whites who killed him."

The Indian Black Tongue edged his way through the crowd to Yellow Wolf's side.

"It is true what Yellow Wolf says," he yelled. "Have they not given bad medicine to the Beaver and Yellow Wolf? And did they not try to give bad medicine to White Eagle? Only because he is all powerful did he prevail. Can Great Hawk, who is ill and helpless, overcome these evil spirits?"

There was a fierce howl from the now half-crazy Indians. Some of them broke through and would have leaped into the open space had they not been restrained by the older chiefs and the medicine-men.

Pretty Feathers stood up and waved his hand for quiet but only a few of the howling maddened Indians would listen to him.

"What are you doing?" he shouted. "Would you turn against the Great Mother's children? You are fools, madmen! Are you so fond of the guard-room, of the gallows? And have they not been our friends? Answer!"

Yellow Wolf stood up again.

"Friends!" he cried back, scornfully, "friends! They are our masters. Pah! you old men are fearful. We young men ask but to fight, to kill. We

shall exterminate them. We shall be free. Do they not bring trouble? Look at Gold Eagle, at the Sword. Look at the Beaver and Yellow Wolf, fallen. Listen," he cried, in a penetrating voice that reached even the Indians farthest off, "listen! If Great Hawk does not die, I will eat my hot words —I will say that I, Yellow Wolf, knew not what I spoke; but if the Manitou refuses to hear me, then shall we know that these whites have brought us trouble and evil and deserve death." He dragged himself forward, panting and screaming, and raising his eyes and hands to the sunlight, began a fierce, wild prayer.

The Indians, half crazy with excitement, scarcely knew what was happening. They looked irresolutely at their chiefs and the medicine-men, uncertain what was expected of them or how or why they were to act. They were in a state of supreme agitation and irresponsibility, when anything was possible to them. A silence, like the silence that falls on a mob just before the first stones are hurled, settled on the throng of maddened Indians. The little party from the detachment waited breath-

lessly, the women trembling and terrified, and even the men white under their tan. They fully realized how impossible it was to make any attempt at resistance, hemmed in, surrounded by five hundred half-crazed Indians. Five unarmed men with seven women to protect were helpless. Even had the men been armed it would have been madness to fire. Captain Eviston told himself that there was not a single ray of hope, that nothing short of a miracle could save them. He had kept the expedition so quiet that his soldiers, who alone could have aided him, did not even know where he was. And although he had spoken of possible trouble, in his heart he had had no fear of it, and this uprising of the usually peaceable Indians came to him as an almost unrealizable shock. A lifetime of suspense was contained in that instance of silence. Captain Eviston turned to the orderly:

"For God's sake, Doyle, talk to them. Say something to quiet these fiends."

Doyle shook his head hopelessly.

"They wouldn't listen to me, sir," he said, "and, besides——"

His words were drowned in a half-smothered shriek of terror from Mrs. Eviston. Raising his head, he heard the quick rush of a pony's hoofs, and saw a narrow lane opening up through the dense mass of Indians, and far down it, uncertainly, miles off seemingly to his bewildered eyes, he saw a little bronco bedecked with painted feathers and scarlet ribbons, whom he had once, ages before, known as Nellie, making her way into the lodge, and on her back Jack, in all the glory of her Indian paraphernalia, casting cordial glances and nods to the Indians, first on one side and then on the other, flecking some particular friend lightly with her little whip, or calling to another familiarly and condescendingly as she rode through in triumph.

Mrs. Eviston laid her hand on her husband's arm. "Arthur," she said, faintly, "Arthur—" She pointed to Jack, and her lips moved unintelligibly.

Doyle leaned down eagerly.

"For the love of 'Eaven, Mrs. Eviston," he gasped, softly, "leave 'er alone. They won't touch 'er, an' she'll fix 'em—she knows 'em."

When Jack reached the centre of the lodge she reined Nellie in, aware all at once that she might be interrupting the proceedings, and a little puzzled at the strange and sudden silence. She looked about her, smiling brightly and fearlessly, though she was a trifle bewildered, and then down at the irresolute faces turned up to her.

"*Satsit, nitsitaffiake!*" ("Behold, I am an Indian also!") she said, gayly, pointing to her fantastic dress and feathers. Suddenly something seemed to give way in the crowd. With a roar of delight and childish amusement the mercurial Indians rushed forward to Jack, pouring into the dancing circle and surging about her, laughing and clapping their hands.

"*Ninspaupit!*" she said, magnificently, from her lofty position on Nellie, and cracking her cuert to keep them at a proper distance.

Pretty Feathers came leaping and pushing his way to her through the crowd.

"*Puksiput!*" she called out delightedly to him. He was her special friend among the chiefs.

"*Kitaipuksapato,*" he answered, hoarsely; and

reaching her side, he sprang up behind her on Nellie. Standing upright on the astonished little pony, he called to the laughing, gesticulating, excited Indians.

"Behold," he cried, "here is the proof of the friendship of the Great Mother and her children for us! Here is the idol of the white man's heart, who comes among us, not as a stranger, but as one of ourselves, who loves us and talks the speech of the red man. She does not harm us, and therefore fears no harm. O fools! what would you have done? Yellow Wolf would have persuaded you to your death. His voice glided to your ears, and you listened. You would have broken the bonds of friendship with our Great White Mother and her sons. She has never broken them with us. The heart of the Indian has become bad. During the long winter he has dreamed evil dreams, and they would blossom into evil deeds under this fierce sun. His blood boils like the water which the Kootenais tell us springs up in their country. Fools! Listen to your wise men, not to the counsels of the young and foolish, such as Yellow Wolf and the Beaver. Be

calm, and bid the sons and daughters of our Great Mother to go in peace and forget the evil thoughts of the Indians!"

He sprang down from the horse, and waving aside the now pacified Indians, threaded his way to Captain Eviston.

"Go in peace," he said, in his soft guttural English, hesitating over the unfamiliar words. And then he added rapidly in Indian to the orderly:

"Tell them to go quickly—now while my Indians are under the spell of this child whom they love. And tell them that it was she who saved them. Tell them that Pretty Feathers grieves for the evil his people would have done, and that, whether Great Hawk lives or dies, he and the other chiefs will hold a council to punish Yellow Wolf for his wicked words."

When they were all safely outside the lodge, Jack became more puzzled than ever. The Indians had acted strangely enough, she thought, but she could not understand at all why the young ladies were crying and the men white and silent, nor the unexpected and effusive affection of which she was

suddenly the object. She disliked very much being kissed and petted and hugged by people who earlier in the day had paid so very little attention to her. Indignation at having missed the great dance, and fear that she had displeased her mother by coming without permission, were also battling together within her and making her very miserable, though still unregenerate.

"I'm a naughty girl, I know," she began, defiantly, sitting up very stiffly on Nellie, "but I'm glad I came, 'cause you went off an' left me; an' I caught Nellie, an' rode as fast as I could, but course I couldn't keep goin' like Bill an' Jim, an' now I've missed the dance—" Here she broke down and wept. "Nex' time you oughter take me—" Jack found herself unable to continue, because she was being hugged and having her tears wiped away simultaneously by seven excited and affectionate young ladies.

Pembroke walked over to Jack and stood beside her pony, waving aside the women impressively.

"I promise you jolly well, Jack," he said, solemnly, "that none of your people will ever go to

another Indian dance without you, and as for myself nothing that I can now think of would ever induce me to forego your company on such occasions."

III

THE HEART OF LAMONT

LAMONT laid his hand lightly on Miss Page's bridle.

"You believe me, don't you?" he asked, with boyish eagerness. She looked up at him with one of those direct, sincere glances for which she was noted.

"Yes," she said, slowly, after a minute's effective pause.

"I've done all sorts of wild things and I've caused my people no end of trouble, and I'm ashamed—Heaven knows! But I haven't done anything irretrievably bad yet. I'm not paid to stay out here in the Territories like many of these fellows, like—but never mind! And since you have taken pity on me and given me some sort of hope and self-respect I feel like a different man—as if I could go in and win yet."

He had spoken rapidly and impetuously, with

his eyes fixed upon the distant horizon, where the sun was just sinking behind Sofa Mountains. But when he finished he turned again to the girl riding at his side and was rewarded for his confidences by a bright and comprehending smile.

She had no need to speak, for Lamont had satisfactorily translated that illuminating smile after his own fashion and desires, and so they rode forward in silence through the short, thick grass of the illimitable prairie, while the wind sprang up freshly from the river on the south and bore to them the scent of the dogroses growing on its banks.

The brief, fierce Canadian summer was at its height, but the peaks of the near Rockies in the afternoon sun shone white and glistening with new fallen snow. Purple, shadowy hollows lay along the mountain-sides, and seemed to invite them as they rode slowly westward toward the detachment. Over in the north a troop of horses suddenly appeared on the crest of a little hill, and, with uplifted heads and wide open nostrils, watched the two solitary riders on the bridle-path below for a moment, then

raced madly down to the level prairie, with tossing manes and ironless hoofs that thundered dully on the soft earth. Far to their left a little band of Indians, with horses and laden travoies, crawled slowly toward the river.

Lamont half turned in his saddle and looked at Miss Page. For him she was the only thing worth looking at in that vast, beautiful scene. And she was good to look at—there could be no question of that. She sat straight and firm in her saddle, the incarnation of health and activity. Beneath her broad-brimmed white sailor her fair, thick hair lay like neatly coiled ropes of gold. The dark, sincere eyes and firmly cut lips were in perfect accord with all the rest of her independent, self-reliant physique.

Lamont, in the absence of any positive information on the subject, fancied that she must look like some beautiful angel, only—and which, after all, was more satisfactory—she was not an angel, but an exceedingly delightful terrestrial being who had been his constant companion for two months and whose company he could enjoy for the remain-

ing two months of her visit to her sister, Mrs. Stirling, chatelaine of the Mounted Police detachment, and wife of the captain.

Miss Page was the victim of her physique. Her imposing stature, the decided, clear-cut features, her strong, white hands, even that honest, straightforward trick she had of lifting her eyelids to look at one, which had no more to do with her real nature than did the color of the eyes beneath, impressed one with the belief that her's must be a singularly sincere, superior character. She had tried to live up to this general impression and had almost succeeded in believing in herself. Only a few very keen and very simple-minded people had been able to penetrate the disguise and discover that the *rôle* was as uncongenial as unsuited to her. Most persons when they found her hard and unsympathetic or narrow or insincere or guilty of follies common to ordinary humankind, upbraided themselves severely for being so blinded by personal unworthiness as to imagine her beset by their own sins. They sorrowfully came to the conclusion that they must be base, indeed, to think such things, and

if they had ever been heartless and bold enough to let her see their disapproval, they begged her forgiveness for having so cruelly misjudged her. She would nearly always forgive such penitent offenders, and in a way which left them doubly impressed with her charity and goodness. A few hopelessly wrong individuals continued to entertain the idea that she never really forgave anyone who had the hardihood to oppose or offend her, and that she was as good a hater as even Dr. Johnson would have wished to see.

Mrs. Stirling was one of the very few persons simple-minded enough to appreciate her sister at her true worth, but she was too loyal to her own blood to betray her discovery. Outwardly she admired and bowed down to Miss Page as did the majority; inwardly she thanked Heaven that she was not as Helen was, but unaffectedly and inconsequently gay, and ridiculously fond of her husband and children, and reprehensively lenient to their faults, and good-natured and contented and not too intellectually and spiritually exalted. Sometimes she wished she were as methodical and

useful and severely just as the younger girl, but she never got to the point of worrying over it. That was one of Mrs. Stirling's chief charms to her friends. She never worried herself or them. Miss Page, on the contrary, frequently gave the impression that in her mind she was worrying over you and talked about your shortcomings, and if you were not properly appreciative of her kindness in so doing that was only another proof of how greatly beneath her you were. The few misguided individuals who resented Miss Page's severe mental attitude said they felt the more aggrieved because they did not believe her capable of understanding any nature unlike her own.

It was this girl whom Lamont regarded so fixedly and tenderly as his pony wound slowly along over the prairie beside her chestnut mare, and if there was one thing in the whole wide world which he was convinced of it was her capacity to understand and sympathize with him.

He turned still further around in his saddle so that he could see her face quite plainly.

"I—I want to talk a little about myself," he

said, hesitatingly, and again he laid his hand on the mare's bridle so that the two horses settled down to the slowest of walks.

"I must talk of myself because I do not dare trust myself to speak of you. And yet how can I talk of myself unless I talk of you, too? For I am what you have made me. It seems like two years instead of two months since I met you—it seems like the beginning of time for me—I wish it had been the beginning! How different my life would have been. Can you realize what you have done for me? Can you imagine what it means to a man who has been sent from his home, cast off by his people, shunned and mistreated, perhaps justly, perhaps unjustly, but that is no matter—who has lived in this forlorn wilderness for two years with hardly a glimpse of a woman, to suddenly meet and know a girl like yourself? Can you realize what a wealth of everything one cares for you have brought to me in this lonely place? Why there's not a soul in this country that cares whether I live or die except my half-breed servant. Charlie does adore me, I believe, after his dog-like fashion, and is even jealous

—of you!" Lamont gave an uneasy little laugh and looked at Miss Page. "I think he has guessed my secret and rather hates you in consequence. He's a violent, curious sort of chap. It's hard for a man to keep a secret in this lonely land," he added, meditatively. Miss Page shuddered. To be the object of a half-breed's thoughts and animosity! Her well-bred soul could not conceive of the desperate loneliness of a life or the strength of a love which would drive a man to betray his heart or go mad.

"Can you not see how inevitable it is that I should care for you," went on Lamont. "It is the inevitableness of that love which gives me courage to speak of it."

Miss Page's calm, fair face was turned resolutely toward the dying sun, and not a sign of the inward indignation which was consuming her was visible in its lovely repose.

"I know I am not worthy to even speak of this—I don't expect anything—I don't hope—" He stopped as if waiting for her to speak, but she kept silence.

She could not think of anything quite hard enough to say. Disgust at his presumption and vexation that he had got so out of bounds were battling within her. She had found him on her advent into the great Northwest Territories a reckless boy, without ambition, sullen at his ill fortune, with time hanging heavy upon his luckless hands, and—she assured herself—she had conceived it to be her duty to take him up and ride with him and scold him about his shortcomings and urge him to do better, and, in fact, to let him attend her unceasingly that he might continually profit by her example and precept—and *this* was the result! He was actually making love to her and talking as if she might have expected it, and saying it was inevitable! She was exceeding sorry now that he had happened to be the only available man for miles around and that she had felt the necessity, not only of reforming the wayward youth, but of amusing herself in such an out-of-the-world place. She wondered irritably and for the several hundredth time why her sister had married a Canadian and an army officer and was content to live in a forlorn lit-

tle hole where one had to pick up anybody or die for lack of some one to talk to.

"I know I am mad to speak of this," Lamont was saying. "I haven't anything to offer you save a heart that is full of love for you. But you have given me back life and hope and self-respect and ambition, and these hands will make a fortune for you, and soon, if you will only trust me and wait for me."

Really it was very tiresome. Here he was stopping again and obviously waiting for some sort of response to his insane rapturings. She turned her lovely eyes slowly from the west and let them rest upon Lamont's tired face, and, with a quick, downward and upward flash of her lashes, she said in her even, full tones.

"Don't—don't! You can't know how it hurts me to hear you talk so—as if you were a reprobate and I had saved you! Have I really helped you? I would like to think so—you know how I like you——"

"I don't want you to *like* me," objected Lamont, dully.

"To like a person means a great deal with me." She wasn't thinking much of what she was saying. Her mind was busy trying to form some plan to get rid of this troublesome boy, and quickly. Oh, if he would only go away and leave her in peace! She would have liked to send him to the uttermost parts of the earth to get him out of her way. If only she could get him back to the detachment without any further explosion of his tiresome devotion. Heavens! he was talking again, and had brightened visibly at the encouragement of her last remark.

"I think," he was saying, and there was an almost pitiful earnestness in his voice, "I think if I could only make you understand in the least how I care for you, that it would make you care for me. But I can no more do that than can Bootjack here," and he smoothed his pony's shaggy mane with a trembling hand. "Even he could do something for you to show his love—he could take you safely on long gallops and carry you across high rivers and serve you faithfully in a thousand ways. While I——"

"And don't you do everything for me, show me everything?"

All his chilled, repressed hopes sprang to life at her words and the tone of her voice.

"And haven't we two more months in which to ride about to our hearts' content, and see more of these wonderful things and be happy?" she added, after an instant's pause, for Miss Page, in her hurried *résumé* of the situation had bethought herself that, after all, it would be wiser not to get rid of this useful young man so summarily. It would undoubtedly be extremely inconvenient to have no one to do her thousand and one errands or to accompany her on her numberless excursions. She did not dare try to find her way alone over the prairie —an escort was absolutely necessary. So she looked unutterable things squarely into his eyes, and Lamont swore to himself that she was the most honest and straightforward girl he had ever known. If she wanted him to be with her for the next two months wasn't that a positive proof that she cared or could learn to care for him? And yet——

"It is a great risk you are asking me to run." Lamont looked off again to the dying sun. He spoke more quietly and more seriously than Miss Page had ever heard him speak before. "I am hurt enough as it is. If I stay here with you two months longer the trouble may be incurable. I am sure that you would not suggest such a thing unless there was some hope for me."

Miss Page looked at him in an amazement which she carefully concealed. Really the boy was absurd! Did he think that she, with her beauty, social standing, and education, who could have the choice of several eligible young men in "the States," was going to throw herself away on *him!* Yet really he was extremely nice to have around for a limited time; he was good-looking, a reckless and beautiful rider, a pleasant companion; in fact, a necessity, as Miss Page had already told herself. Besides, she felt sure that she must be helping him to become his former self—he had said so himself. The damage to his heart could be attended to later. At all hazards she must save him in spite of himself, if necessary. In trying to live up to her

physique she had got to reasoning after that fashion.

She raised her eyes suddenly in that wonderful way she knew the art of, and gave him a long look straight into the eyes. There was the tenderest smile upon her face.

"Thank you for your trust in me. But don't—don't ask me anything to-day—to make any promises. Give me these two months more to make sure of myself—" She turned away from him suddenly, as if she could not say anything more, and looked across the prairie. The detachment must be in sight. Yes, there it was not three miles away. Miss Page breathed a short prayer of thankfulness. She decided within herself that this thing should not happen again.

Lamont leaned forward over his saddle and laid his hand almost timidly on the young girl's arm. He might have so touched the image of some saint without desecration.

"I am content with that," he said, in his eager, boyish voice. "I should be an ungrateful brute not to be. I promise you that I will not speak to you of

this during these two months if you will only let me be with you and try to make the time pass pleasantly for you."

"Thank you again," said Miss Page, impressively—almost solemnly. She took herself so very seriously! "And, indeed," she went on more brightly, "I think I really cannot do without you! You don't know how lonely I get sometimes. Captain Stirling is awfully busy, and he is away so much, and Louise is wrapped up in the babies. Very often I feel that if it were not for you and our rides—! And, do you know, I don't find things so interesting as I had expected! If you did not point out and explain them to me I am afraid I should go back to the States as ignorant about all this country as I was when I came. Now, there are the Indians," she went on, shaking her head meditatively. "Really, I can't see anything picturesque or uncommon or thrilling about them. Except for their faces and dress they might be any beggar immigrants of the States. Have they lost all their ferocity and wild ways and barbarous customs?" She was talking to gain time.

Lamont smiled a little, unconscious of how cleverly he had been sidetracked.

"Oh, they are a rummy lot! They do look like ordinary beggars when they come around the inspector's quarters, and I dare say they have lost a good deal of their old bravery and lawlessness, but one can never tell quite what they are about or what they will do next. They are still ferocious enough, I fancy. And as for their old-time customs —well, although the Government has done away with the most obnoxious ones, there are still a great many which are practised in secret. I have heard stories and seen things myself which most civilized people would put down as incredible and out of date. And as for their methods of warfare—! But they are too horrible to talk of. Now their medicine, for example," he went on, hastily. "Every Indian has his medicine, and I fancy it would be about as difficult and sacrilegious a proceeding to buy the dead body of an English gentleman from his son as to buy a chief's medicine-bag from him."

"I don't think I understand about their medicine." Miss Page seemed so interested that Lamont

started off on a long dissertation upon the much-discussed medicine of the Indian.

"And nothing will induce a good Indian to part with his particular medicine," he wound up. "He makes it when, as a boy, he leaves his father's tepee and goes into the woods fasting and dreaming all alone. After a certain amount of fasting he naturally sinks into an exhausted sleep, and the first animal he dreams of he takes to be his special medicine. On waking he goes in pursuit of this bird or beast, makes of its skin the medicine-bag and fills it with a conglomeration of things that causes the witches' caldron in 'Macbeth' to appear a simple affair in comparison. To lose or sell this medicine is the most dreadful thing that can happen to a brave, and in a fight if one can succeed in capturing the medicine of another, the whole tribe makes a terrible row over the victor. His prestige becomes enormous, and he can wear both medicines. The beggars think so much of the idiotic thing that the medicine-bag is always buried with them, and nothing would induce an Indian to steal one from a corpse. It would then become a terrible

curse, and Heaven only knows what punishment the other Indians would mete out to him. It really isn't nice to think about it!"

"Well, if it isn't nice it certainly is interesting."

"Yes, it is interesting," went on Lamont, meditatively. "Did you hear of that bad Indian chief who died about three weeks ago just the other side of the line in Montana? It seems he was an awful brute, and everybody, especially the United States troops, who have had bloody times with him and his band, was delighted when the beggar died of pneumonia—they are susceptible to lung troubles, you know. But some of his Piegan relatives over here must have had a sneaking fondness for him, for they brought his body back and buried it in great state about a hundred and fifty miles south of here, and Pretty Feathers told me there had not been such a grand funeral in years among the Indians."

Miss Page's face suddenly expressed some real interest.

"How I wish I had seen it!" she exclaimed, "and how I should like to have his medicine-bag! What

a trophy to take back! I'm tired to death of all these head-dresses and coup-sticks and things that one can buy for a song. But to have something really curious like a medicine-bag—something that they didn't want you to have—that would be fine!

"But," she went on, "won't it be dangerous to try to get it? I wouldn't have you run any risks for a mere whim of mine." She gave Lamont a bewildering look.

The young man gazed at her with narrowed lids and there was a reckless light in the shadowed eyes.

"Oh, not much!" he said, slowly. "Anyway, it doesn't matter about the risks."

It was too good to be true. Here was the very opportunity to get rid of him for a while at least. After a little she would have use for him again, but just now she was glad to get him out of her sight.

"Great Buffalo was such a noted desperado," he went on, "that it would really be worth while to take back his big medicine to your civilized land as a sort of proof that your advent to our wild

west had not been in vain. The body is buried in some high trees, of course, out on the prairie. There was some sort of an Indian guard kept there at first, I believe, but it has doubtless been withdrawn by this time. Anyway, I'm not afraid of them nor of the curse that is said to fall upon the despoiler of medicine-bags. Perhaps it will have some spell in it that will bring good—or bad—luck to me. Who knows?"

"Don't—don't," said Miss Page, with a little shudder.

"It's the least we can do for you," continued Lamont, whimsically. "You say you are disappointed in the country."

"Yes," said Miss Page, laughing a little, "I am. Except the Sun-Dance nothing exciting has happened since my arrival. I haven't seen any wild beasts, nor been scalped by the Indians, nor drowned fording the high rivers, nor lost on the prairie. I consider my visit a failure in the line of adventure, and I really should like some proof that things are different out here from what they are in the effete east. Why, it's all as quiet and regular

as a New England farm. If it were not for the amount of space around the Rockies over there one might imagine oneself somewhere up in Connecticut!"

"And yet," commented Lamont, slowly, "things are very different—beneath the surface. But girls living under the protecting arm of the law—in other words, in the inspector's quarters," and he pointed to the shack which they had at last reached, "are not apt to see them. As I said, I could tell you some curious and sufficiently exciting facts. And the best part is that you never know when you are going to run up against them. To-day or to-morrow or next day as likely as not. I fancy, though, that after all you would not enjoy encountering thrilling adventures. But I will do my best to have some come your way. At any rate, you shall have Great Buffalo's medicine-bag, and I promise you that it will be something curious."

Mrs. Stirling was calling to them from behind the screened door.

"Come in while I make you a glass of lemonade! Oh, how dusty and hot you two look!"

But the young man shook his head.

"Can't this evening. Thanks, awfully, Mrs. Stirling," he called out as he vaulted back on his pony.

Miss Page came in alone and sank down exhaustedly on a pile of kit-fox rugs in a corner of the little parlor.

"Louise," she said, in a voice wherein weariness and indignation were about equally blended, "Louise, that young Lamont had the audacity this afternoon to tell me that he loved me! After all I have done for him—and you know, Louise, how kind and sympathetic I have tried to be—he had the ingratitude to talk to me after that fashion."

Mrs. Stirling looked at her sister a moment before replying.

"What did you expect?" she inquired at length, calmly. "You have let him come here continually, and when you weren't here you were off riding or driving together. You aren't exactly repulsive looking, and he is a lonely, sad young fellow, to whom the companionship of a girl like yourself has been an unknown luxury for some time now. I hope

you haven't hurt him badly—I like him," she added, abruptly.

Miss Page got up and went quickly into her room. She was rarely undignified enough to quarrel even when she was angry. And she was angry now. She told herself that she might have expected just that amount of sympathy and comprehension from her sister.

Late that night Dawson, the orderly, brought her a note, which he said an Indian had just given to him. Miss Page read it by the light of her lamp:

"I am sending this to tell you that I start in a few hours for a certain Indian grave in the south. This expedition seems a ridiculously small affair to undertake when I so long to do something really for you. But even your whims shall be satisfied if I can manage it. The half-breed, Charlie, will go with me. He has some foolish notion that there is a stupendous curse attached to the whole expedition and untold dangers will beset me. He is devoted to me and won't leave me. I am going to send him back with our little trophies and go on to Calgary to attend to some business. I can't begin working for you too soon. So, although

I shall miss seeing you for perhaps a month to come, I shall still be doing something for you, and something worth while. I am hoping that may incline you a little in my favor. F. L."

Miss Page looked at the note in blank amazement and anger. It was too absurd! After all her kindness and management of him and his ridiculous devotion, here he was gone just when she needed him. And for what? What earthly interest had she in a dead Indian's medicine-bag? She didn't care if she never saw one. Her momentary interest of a few hours before had utterly vanished. Of course she didn't believe there was any danger; it was only the stupidity of the whole affair that annoyed her. And Calgary! Business and for her! Miss Page laughed out loud. If it were not such a bother it would be amusing, but to be abandoned by the only available escort in the middle of the summer on a lonely ranche was no joke.

Miss Page stifled a little yawn as she put out her lamp.

"I really think I shall have to leave here very soon. A month of solitude out of two would kill me.

In a week or so I fear I shall feel it my duty to go back to my dear, lonely, old father," and she laughed again lightly as she went into the little parlor.

* * * * * *

Miss Page was writing a letter by the light of the lamp in the captain's little study leading out of the sitting-room. It was just ten days after Lamont's note had come, and she was answering it before leaving for the east. Her trunks stood packed in the veranda waiting for the early coach to take them forty miles to the nearest railway station. As she wrote she could hear the low hum of conversation between her sister and brother-in-law in the adjoining room. Their voices did not disturb her, though her letter was rather difficult to write. She could hardly find words to make it sufficiently plain to Lamont that she did not care for him and that he had never stood a chance with her. She would have liked to tell him just how absurd and presumptuous his conduct had seemed to her.

Suddenly the voices in the sitting-room stopped, and Captain Stirling got up and went to the window.

"Heavens! what can the dogs be making such a row about this time of night? Some of the horse-trading Kootenais must be about."

It was ten o'clock and the three dogs in the enclosure were howling as if a whole tribe of Indians were trying to force an entrance. Just then the orderly appeared at the door.

"It's the 'alf-breed, Charlie, sir," he explained, "and 'e says 'e 'as a message for Miss Page."

Miss Page looked up from her writing and through the open door to where the orderly waited near the piano. A sudden curious sense of impending evil fell upon her. She rose slowly and passed into the sitting-room.

"Tell him I will see what he wants, Dawson," she said.

Outside on the veranda stood the half-breed. He was a tall, well-featured boy, with that look peculiar to mixed races. The Indian showed in his high cheek-bones and swarthy skin, while his French

blood cropped out in his light hair, blue eyes, and the air of alertness about him, so different from Indian stolidity.

There was no alertness about nim now, however. He leaned heavily against one of the posts of the veranda, and Miss Page could make out, by the bright moonlight, that his face was deadly pale. One arm hung limp at his side; over the other the bridle of his pony shifted up and down. The poor brute looked as exhausted as his rider, and stood with head hanging down and feet bunched.

"What is it?" she asked. The boy looked at her darkly before speaking.

"Misteh Lamont sen' you this." He was tugging at some object fastened to his saddle.

"You done kill Misteh Lamont," he said, wearily and savagely. There was a gleam of wild hate in his eyes as he looked at Miss Page's white face, but he was too nearly spent for many words. He spoke between gasps.

"Misteh Lamont go to Indian's grave for medicine-bag. Bad Indians fin' it out. Misteh Lamont he laughs and tells everybody he goin' to get Great

Buffalo's medicine-bag — he not afraid." He stopped to wipe the perspiration from his forehead. It was standing in great drops on his face, though he shook as if with cold. He steadied himself against the post.

"Well, we got it one dark night, and then we start home. Misteh Lamont he goes ahead singing soft to himself and holding medicine-bag. All of a sudden near Lapierre's we hear five, six Indians ridin' after us hard. I think they Great Buffalo's people—Piegans, you know. Misteh Lamont he drop the medicine-bag quick in the bushes before the Indians they see it, and he hollers: 'Get out of this, Charlie!' but 'course I stay with Misteh Lamont." He stopped again and pressed his handkerchief, blood-stained and dirty, to his damp brow. "We shot two them bad Indians and the others they go 'way. But one, he shot Misteh Lamont and I got this," he touched his shattered arm. "When I wake up I crawl to Misteh Lamont. My God! those Indians they cut his heart out! The Indians they do that when a man is brave like an Indian. White miss don't know Indians— And they leave

that heart on arrow sticking up near bushes where Misteh Lamont dropped that medicine. My God! I cry." He was crying then and weakly swaying back and forth against the pillar. "And I said the white miss will see what she done to Misteh Lamont. An' I fin' the medicine-bag and I put Misteh Lamont's heart in it an' I bring her this!"

He stretched forth his free hand, and in it was the skin of an otter sewed into the shape of a sack and decorated with ermine tails and eagle feathers and bits of glass and ribbon.

The girl shrank back in terror.

"Take it!" he commanded, hoarsely. But the girl still shrank back voiceless and quivering.

Then the half-breed pulled at the opening of the bag, and putting in his hand he dragged forth a dark, bloody object and thrust it into her paralyzed grasp.

In the cool beauty of the night the girl stood there upon the veranda holding the bloody thing in her nerveless fingers and uttering shriek upon shriek.

For an instant the Indian watched her with sav-

age satisfaction, and then, with one spring, he was upon his pony, and, striking the beast, dashed forward into the darkness, the dogs yelping wildly after the retreating hoof-beats.

IV

A COUNTESS OF THE WEST

THE early afternoon sun was sending a blaze of light down the one street of Fort Highwood as Miss Lily Ogden dismissed the dozen pupils who constituted her small and select school. A meditative but wholly pleased expression lay in her wide, gray eyes as she watched them romp joyously out of the sagging wooden gate and disappear after various frontier methods—a-horseback before their impatient fathers, or in mud-bespattered wagons which had forded swollen Highwood Creek to get to town, or, as in the single notable case of the inspector's children, in an aristocratically high and clean government cart.

The sun shone with brilliant impartiality on this pageant, on the straggling street, which resembled nothing so much as a section of old Coney, on the

white summit of Sofa Mountain, still snow-capped in the fierce heat of the short Canadian summer, and on Miss Lily Ogden's golden-brown hair.

As the government trap with the two big horses and Doyle sitting stiffly and immaculately on the box finally disappeared in a cloud of dust, she drew a quick sigh.

"It's absurd, of course, but if it wasn't for that trap and the Honorable Arthur Lionel Stepney St. John I think I would chuck all this and go back to Helena and civilization! What's a free-born American doing teaching geography and arithmetic to little Englanders, anyway?"

Suddenly she smiled enigmatically, showing the white, even teeth between her full, scarlet lips. "Never mind—only two months more of it!" and turning her back on the illuminated street she sauntered up to the little piazza and threw herself into a hammock which swung there, carefully screened from the profane gaze of Indians and cowboys by a thick curtain of gently swaying moon-flowers.

She was quite beautiful as she lay there, one

small-booted, unmistakably American foot tapping the floor to keep up the gentle motion of the hammock. The simple white shirtwaist and short riding-skirt which she wore, gracefully revealed the lithe figure. Even in repose both face and figure bore testimony to the capable, energetic character of Miss Lily Ogden, American. This testimony was only contradicted by the tender light in the dark-gray eyes and the full, scarlet mouth. The combination made one think irresistibly of the sugar which tempers the strength and acidity of the vinegar in sweet pickle.

It was this union of shrewdness and romanticism which had brought Miss Ogden from Montana to the little Canadian army post three hundred miles to the northward across the Canadian line. A course at one of the small western colleges for women, and in which the study of Tennyson had figured prominently, had rendered school-teaching in Helena a distasteful necessity to her. She had been drawn to Fort Highwood by the alluring business argument that the young population stood in dire need of a school-teacher, and that she

would be the " whole show " in that capacity, and as much by what she vaguely termed its "possibilities."

For quite a while just what she had meant by "possibilities" promised to remain a secret between Miss Lily Ogden and her soul, but with the advent in Highwood of the Honorable Arthur Lionel Stepney St. John, second son of the Earl of Rigby, the nightly perusals of "Locksley Hall," "Lady Claire," and "Marianna in the Moated Grange" took on new interest, and the enigmatical "possibilities" developed, under her fostering care, into probabilities and finally into an achievement in which she delighted, not, however, it must be confessed, with entirely unmixed feelings of joy.

There were drawbacks, and she owned it. As she rocked gently to and fro in her hammock she reviewed the situation for the hundredth time with that delightful philosophy born of the combination of the practical and the ideal which constituted the chief charm of her character. But even regarded with the most cheerful philosophy, the Honorable Arthur left much to be desired. Indeed, the

only point on which she could dwell with unalloyed pleasure was his undeniable and close connection with one of the most aristocratic families of England. That he was in disgrace with his father, the noble and irascible Earl of Rigby, made the relationship less interesting and profitable, but did not alter the fact.

Although Miss Ogden had been secretly engaged to the Honorable Arthur for four months, she still gasped with pleasure when she thought of the noble earl. It was a good deal for an unknown young woman hailing from Montana to be engaged to anybody with an earl for a father and ancestral halls and a real English accent, even if he were a somewhat dissipated younger son and financially encouraged by his aggrieved family to remain in the Canadian N. W. T. Besides, she felt sure of reforming him—he had been "on the water wagon" ever since their engagement, thanks to her efforts—and she dreamed of seeing him and her fond and happy self recalled to the ancestral home and made welcome. Further than that in the realm of fancy her practical nature did not allow her to

roam and she absolutely refused to kill off, even in imagination, the Honorable Arthur's elder brother and his two sons. And then there were other days—the days when her practical American common-sense was uppermost, and she felt rather appalled by his failures and his bigness and British stupidity. She told herself sometimes that she simply couldn't stand him if he were not so good-looking and so dependent and so eager to be led and guided by her own superior intelligence. She felt a good deal of the protecting pity and affection for him which a mother feels for a backward child. He had cast himself upon her, figuratively speaking, and she felt rather responsible and not a little anxious for him. He had revived like a drooping flower under her care (to change the simile), and whatever were his shortcomings—and her shrewd, clever brain could see them all—she felt sure of his love and gratitude.

It was just as she had reached this cheering conclusion to her meditations that she heard the pounding of a pony over the wooden bridge at the end of the street, and looking out between the

moon-flower vines beheld the Honorable Arthur throw himself off his pinto and come slowly up the walk. Usually he lost much of his British heaviness and slowness with her and she wondered now what his dejected gait betokened.

"Down on his luck again," she murmured. "Dear me, he is more care than all the school-children put together," and then she touched her rumpled hair and put on her brightest smile to welcome him.

But for once the smile seemed to make no impression and the Honorable Arthur subsided gloomily into a low wicker chair opposite the hammock.

The tender light faded from Miss Ogden's gray eyes and was replaced by a shrewd glance, its severity tempered by curiosity and good-will.

"You have something to tell me," she remarked, quietly, with that faculty of going straight to the point which distinguished her and frequently irritated him.

The Honorable Arthur sat up in surprise. Lily could sometimes make him sit up physically as she always did mentally.

"Yes—that's a dooced good guess of yours, Lily! How'd you know?" inquired the young man, moodily, turning a disturbed countenance upon her.

"Oh, I didn't need to be a Blood Indian conjurer or the clairvoyant down at Calgary to find that out. What I don't know is—what is troubling you."

"Get your hat on, Lily, and let's go for a ride," said the young man, suddenly getting up. "I'll get your pony."

She was ready in a moment, for, like most of the population, male and female, of Fort Highwood, she lived in her riding things. They took their way slowly across the prairie toward Fort Macleod, the dying winds singing softly in their ears. For some moments neither spoke.

"You have something to tell me," said the girl again at length.

"Yes. I—I've had some news," he replied, his blue eyes looking past her out to the dusty road. A slight flush showed in his thin cheeks and mounted to his forehead, which was still aristocrat-

ically white where the brim of his broad felt hat protected it.

Miss Ogden, after a severe struggle with herself, had got used to the dog-like appeal in the Honorable Arthur's blue eyes, and in fact had come to expect and rather like it. This restless, shifting glance was something new and filled her with a nameless alarm.

"What is it, Arthur?" She leaned slightly forward in the saddle. "What is it?"

The young man put his hand inside the breast pocket of his riding-jacket and drew out a letter. It was large and rich-looking, and as the Honorable Arthur turned it over, the girl caught sight of a heavily embossed crest on the flap of the envelope.

"It can't be from—" she gave a little gasp.

"Yes—it is, though—from the governor, sure enough. Never thought the old boy would write to me again, but he has!" The Honorable Arthur gave a joyous laugh with a little ring of triumph in it. The girl had never heard him laugh like that before —it was a revelation. She looked at him curiously.

"Why, I thought you were afraid of your father?" she said, tentatively.

"Well, I am—more or less—but don't you see it's a bloomin' good sign, his writin' to me, and a better one that he is comin' out here."

"Coming—here!" Miss Ogden gave another gasp and clutched her bridle so tightly that her pinto did park steps of his own design.

"Yes—by Jove," said the Honorable Arthur, with another excited laugh. "The only drawback is that the old boy is comin' right off—he'll get here to-morrow or next day. This bloomin' letter's been lying at the post-office in Calgary for a week. Can't make out what's happened to it." He still held it in his hand, turning it over and over and making no offer to show it to her.

"I wish I had had a few days' notice to polish up things a bit about the ranche—he'll be down on me worse than ever when he sees the dirty shack and the stables. Oh, Lord, the stables! You ought to see the stables at home—at Rigby Park."

He sighed reminiscently and softly cut at his dusty riding-boots with his cuert.

"I wish I could," said the girl. To her surprise the color showed again beneath the brick-dust red of his cheeks, and he shifted uneasily in the saddle.

"Don't you think it's a good sign, his comin' over?" he queried, avoiding her glance.

"Certainly," said the girl, promptly.

"He must want to see me and he must feel an interest in me or he wouldn't come," he went on, persuasively.

"Of course," assented Miss Ogden. "And after all, why shouldn't he? You never did anything so awful!"

"Well, I always had a talent for getting into trouble, and that last affair in the Guards made me come an awful cropper," he confessed.

"Well, you've done the earnest youth racket for some time now, and he ought to forgive you," declared the girl, warmly. "Why, you've completely reformed and——"

The young man looked at her. "Yes—thanks to you, Lily," he said, gratefully. "I never would have pulled up if it hadn't been for you. It's been so long since my mother died, and my two sisters

are as hard as nails," he laughed a little. "Geoffrey did try to give me a lift, but it was no use and he was in a blue funk for fear he'd get the governor down on *him*, so when the time came I just cut loose and I'd have been a more forlorn devil than I was if it hadn't been for you."

"Don't—please, don't," she said, hastily. She hated to have that side of him—the irresolute, dependent phase of his character—borne in upon her. She recognized it but she tried to ignore it.

"By Jove!" he went on, after a slight pause and in an entirely different tone of voice, "it will seem great to see him! He was awfully good to me when I was a little chap—gave me a bloomin' lot of money when I was at Harrow, and asked down half the fellows in my form to the Park at the term ends! He'll tell me all about the house and old Bunton, the gardener, and Dobbs, the under-coachman —we were great pals!—and if the elms on the south terrace are still standing. Olney, the landscape-gardener from Edinburgh, wanted them cut down but the governor flew into a passion and packed him back home." He laughed immoderately

at the recollection and Miss Ogden stared wistfully ahead of her while he rambled on.

"Who knows but the old chap will propose taking me back with him?" he ventured, joyously, a few minutes later. "Oh, it would be too good to be true! Two years of exile in this God-forsaken country! Phew! it's enough to make one want to get back to London. People may say what they want to about the grand, free life of the western prairies. Thank you kindly—I'll take little old England! Jove, how I would like to see London, with all its horrid sights and smells and sounds and the clubs and the theatres and the hansoms rolling round Piccadilly Circus and Regent Street, and—oh! the whole bally lot of it! And as for the country and Rigby Park and the lawns and the country roads and hedges of hawthorn—!" He stopped in silent ecstasy and the girl regarded him wonderingly. She had never seen him like that.

"Oh! this is *hell*, I tell you," he went on, after a moment. "I wish I could say good-by to this life and everything and everybody in it." The girl turned a pale, unsmiling face upon him, but he

paid no attention. "Jove, how I would love to get back! The worst thing about the old boy's comin' just now is that I've *got* to go on the round-up. He'll have to stay at the Highwood House for the two weeks, and I'll get the boys to look after him. The Lord only knows what he'll hear about me!"

"Perhaps I could take care of him better than the boys—I might reconcile him to our engagement," said the girl.

"That's just what I wanted to talk to you about," said the Honorable Arthur, slowly.

"I'm glad I come into the game somewhere," remarked the girl, stiffly. "I hadn't noticed that I had been very much in your calculations."

"Well, I can't help your being an American," he broke in, querulously, "and the governor hates Americans jolly well. He's got a bloomin' lot of theories about the British aristocracy bein' the chosen people, and all that sort of thing. I was thinkin'," he turned his weak, handsome face away and gazed uneasily off to the gleaming mountains, from whence he derived no visible help, "that we'd

best not say anything about—about our engagement just now. You see," he went on, hastily, "it would only spoil everything. The old man would be everlastingly down on me if he thought I was going to marry an American."

"And a poor school-teacher," added Miss Ogden. She sat up straight and stiff in her saddle, her fine face hardening into a disdainful mask.

"Why don't you say what you mean?" she demanded, scornfully.

"If you know so jolly well what I mean there's no use of saying it," replied the Honorable Arthur, sulkily, and gave a cut to his pony.

"Don't hurt the horse! You're ashamed of me!" Her American blood flamed up in the smooth cheeks and the wide gray eyes looked like scintillating points of steel. "So this is what the son of an English earl is like! I knew that the daughter of a hundred of them was not to be desired, but it strikes me that the sons must be even a trifle more worthless!"

"I don't know what you're talking about," objected the young man, who, in truth, had never

made the acquaintance of Lady Clara Vere de Vere. "Can't you understand? It's this way, Lily. The old man seems to be warming up to me again —after all the old boy used to call me his favorite —and now he'd be more angry than ever to take this long trip over here to find me engaged to an American girl, and some one he doesn't know—he never would have anything to do with people he didn't 'know'—but when I come back we'll fix it all up——"

"Not so fast!" said the young girl, imperiously. She leaned forward and meditatively smoothed the pony's mane with her riding-whip. "I think it most unlikely that I shall wait around until you decide to come back; and besides—you won't come back, so we will probably never 'fix it up,' as you say. I know you too well—you will never come back to this country once you've seen your dear little England again. Why, you are like a different man at the mere thought of going! Intoxicated at the idea of seeing Rigby Park and the under-coachman and footman, and the Lord knows who else in that aristocratic paradise! And while you've been talking

about it you've never once thought of me or of taking me there."

She looked at the Honorable Arthur, abashed and weakly unhappy, and a wave of disgust swept over her. He was so big and stupid and irresolute. She would have liked him better if he had told her with brutal frankness that he no longer cared for her and wouldn't marry her. She had thought him grateful at least, and he wasn't even that. The affection he had inspired in her fell from her like a discarded garment. Suddenly she unfastened a button of her shirtwaist and drew from around her neck a little blue ribbon on which hung a seal ring. With a jerk she snapped the ribbon and slipped off the ring. She held it out to him.

"There," she said, coolly, "take it back to Rigby Park and give it to some fine English girl whom your father happens to know! I hope you'll enjoy your England. Montana's good enough for me!"

As she swept the Honorable Arthur with a scornful glance, she suddenly saw his jaw drop and a curious look spring into his eyes. Following the di-

rection of his gaze she beheld two riders approaching at a hand gallop, a Mounted Police officer from Fort Macleod, whom she knew, and following briskly in his wake, a handsome Englishman of middle age. The hair about his temples was heavily tinged with white, but his complexion was as fresh and pink and white as a baby's, and he was most immaculately got up in riding things.

"It's the governor," she heard the Honorable Arthur whisper incredulously to himself.

The meeting between the two was cold and formal, after the fashion of the Anglo-Saxon male. Miss Ogden looked on in fascinated silence. The Earl of Rigby put up a single eyeglass and surveyed his son.

"By gad, my boy, I'm glad to see you again. You aren't looking any too fit, you know."

"Thanks, father—yes, I know it. When did you get here?"

"Just stepped off the train at Macleod two hours ago. Beastly train."

"Yes, isn't it? Howd'y do, Nevin?"

"Howd'y do, St. John? Howd'y do, Miss Og-

den? Haven't seen you for a long while. May I—may I—the Earl of Rigby, Miss Ogden."

The Earl of Rigby screwed his glass in again—it had fallen out when he had shaken his son's hand—and stared at the young woman before him.

"Awfully glad to meet you, I'm sure," he said, affably. "I—I had always understood that this country was an Eveless paradise. I'm glad to see I'm mistaken."

Miss Lily Ogden surveyed the Earl of Rigby imperturbably. Not one of the thrills which an hour before she would have supposed necessarily attendant on an introduction to a noble earl now disturbed her composure. Even his exaggeratedly polite compliment left her perfectly cool. He simply seemed to her an extremely handsome man, a good deal cleverer and stronger-looking than his son.

"This country wouldn't be a paradise at all without Miss Ogden," said Nevin, gallantly. "She's the best horsewoman in Fort Highwood and she'll help St. John show you the country, my lord."

"Thanks, Captain Nevin." She smiled on him

sweetly, showing the white, even teeth between the scarlet lips, and then she turned to the Earl of Rigby. "I shall be delighted to show you the country—especially as Mr. St. John is obliged to go away in two or three days."

"I should like nothing better," said the earl, with conviction.

"Have to go on the round-up," murmured the Honorable Arthur.

"That's hard luck," said Nevin, sympathetically. "Two weeks, I suppose."

"Yes—father'll have to stop for a bit at the Highwood House. I fancy he'll wish he were back in England!"

"Not if Miss Ogden will ride with me," observed the earl.

A curious light came into the girl's gray eyes.

"I could show your lordship a new trail every day for the two weeks, and at the end of the time I am sure you could not decide which to call the prettiest," she asserted.

"I dare say," assented the earl, eagerly; "but I would like to try."

"Oh, Miss Ogden will take good care of you," said Nevin. "And now, as you have two guides, if you will excuse me, I think I won't go on into Highwood. Your lordship's things will be sent over early in the morning. His lordship was so anxious to see you, St. John, that we couldn't even persuade him to mess with us to-night," he remarked, jocularly, to the Honorable Arthur. "And now I will turn back, I think. Good-by!" He waved a gauntleted hand, and wheeling his horse set off at an easy canter for the fort.

A somewhat awkward constraint fell upon the three so left, which Miss Ogden dispelled by turning her horse toward Highwood, and riding on slightly ahead of the Honorable Arthur and his father. The earl gazed admiringly at her slim back.

"By gad, she's a beauty, Arthur, my deah boy, and she sits her horse perfectly."

"She's an American," remarked the young man, aggressively.

"She's beautiful enough to be English," retorted the earl, warmly. He spurred forward and

rode at her right hand. The Honorable Arthur rather sulkily closed up on the left.

"I was just saying to Arthur, Miss Ogden, that he could go on the round-up and jolly welcome as long as you have promised to show me the country. I am most deeply interested in our Canadian possessions, you know," said the earl.

She shot him a glance from under the black lashes of her gray eyes which made the Earl of Rigby fairly gasp.

"I shall try my best to keep your lordship from being bored while Mr. St. John is away," she said, sweetly.

It was two weeks later, or, to be perfectly exact, two weeks and four days later, that a half-breed was sent down to the Morgan round-up, twenty-five miles west of Calgary, with a telegram for St. John. The Honorable Arthur was so dirty, tired, dusty, and sunburnt that the half-breed had difficulty in picking him out from the rest of the dirty, tired, dusty, and sunburnt round-up crew.

The sight of the telegram filled the young man

with an indefinable fear, and the paper fluttered in his trembling hand like a withered leaf on a wind-shaken bough.

"Meet the 2.40 from Macleod at Calgary. Will be on train. Most important. RIGBY."

His swollen tongue and parched lips got drier, his cracked and tanned skin paled as he read and reread the message. Suddenly a joyous thought came to him. "The old boy's relented sure, and wants me to go back with him," he told himself over and over. He thrust his few things into the one portmanteau he had brought with him and made such good time doing the twenty-five miles into Calgary that he had been pacing up and down the station platform for ten minutes when the train pulled in.

The Earl of Rigby, who had been hanging over the vestibule rail of the observation car, swung himself lightly down and cordially grasped his son's hand. The Honorable Arthur was struck afresh by the good looks and youthfulness of his aristocratic father.

"By Jove, Arthur, I'm glad to see you got my telegram, and I'm glad you got here in time. What? No, you won't need your portmanteau. The truth is," he gave an infectious laugh, "the Countess of Rigby—she was Miss Lily Ogden until last night, my deah boy—and I are on our way to England, and we couldn't leave the country without seeing you again. Won't you step into the coach and speak to her?"

V

A DOUBTING THOMAS

THERE was a dinner party at the inspector's. This sounds grander than the facts warrant, but it was a very cosy little stag party of six, just the same. Besides the host, Captain Whitney, of the Highwood detachment, there was Captain Stanway, a brother officer from Fort Macleod; young Allen, of the Crow's Nest ranche; Ingalls, a member of Parliament for Assiniboia; Professor Thomas Berwick, of Oriel College, Oxford, the guest of honor, and Father Lemaire, the French Catholic priest, who knows more about the Indians of Northwest Canada than everybody else put together, including the Indians themselves.

They had discussed a number of interesting topics during the evening, but the professor had always skilfully led the conversation back to the subject of Indians. Apparently he knew everything but Indians, and equally apparently he was

bent on acquiring as much information about them as possible before the evening was over. The professor called it "data," and he turned his spectacled eyes with almost ferocious interest upon first one and then another of the captain's guests as they contributed bits of personal experience or legends or theories concerning the Indians. Everything was to go down in a little red note-book before the professor slept.

"And, by Jove, the rummy beggars brought the identical rocks and tin pans and kettles into court the next day as evidence! It was a sight to see them file into the room hugging a large black pot or a heavy stone. Nothin' would have induced 'em to part with 'em, and I gave 'em big damages." It was Allen, of the Crow's Nest ranche, and a J. P. who was talking.

"They hadn't done a thing," he went on, "but cut down a few of old Cartwright's trees to get poles for their tepees, but Lord! he was in an awful temper over it, and rocked 'em hard. They were as wise as serpents and didn't return fire at all, but just gathered in the stones as they sailed over, each

one keeping the particular one he was hit with. When the rocks were used up Cartwright and his son got hold of their ironmongery and shied that at 'em. Ditto—they each held on to the kettle or pan that had landed on them, and produced the whole outfit in court before me next day. It was all I could do to keep from burstin' with laughter when I saw that banged-up crowd and the rocks and kitchen things. *I* thought they had acted rather well and let 'em off easy and gave Cartwright and his son no end of a blowin' up and fines."

The professor stopped sipping his coffee and leaned far back.

"Bless my soul! Most interesting," he said, meditatively, looking at Allen. "In fact, I find the whole subject of the North American Indian, in all its ramifications, very fascinating. And I feel it not only my pleasure, but my duty to study him. It is for that purpose, indeed, that I left Oxford to come among them. I have only three months, my time is short, but I presume—" He stopped, arrested by the look of blank amazement on Captain

Whitney's face. Allen thought it was a joke and looked up to laugh, but, seeing the professor's serious countenance, suddenly choked and drank some water.

The professor looked uneasily around at the silent company.

"You don't think—" he began, tentatively.

Stanway threw up his hands. "Oh! *we* can't tell you anything at all," he declared. "We are only soldiers, and aren't supposed to really understand the beggars. Besides we've only been out here a short while. Whitney's been here ten years, but I'm a new-comer—only five. Ingalls *ought* to know something about 'em—he helps legislate for 'em—but I doubt if he does. Father Lemaire is the only man around here who really *knows* 'em. He's lived with 'em and preached to 'em and punished and rewarded and bossed 'em generally. Ask him."

The priest was gazing down at his plate and turning his coffee-cup around and around. There was an enigmatical smile on his face. The professor twisted himself in his chair and looked rather helplessly at him. From his place at the other end

of the table, Ingalls could see the two, and there was an amused twinkle in his eye.

"I am afraid I cannot tell you much about them." The priest spoke English with so little accent that it would be impossible to indicate it. He could talk ten unpronounceable Indian dialects fluently, and it wasn't likely that he would make a mistake in a little thing like English. "*Que sais-je?* I have only been among them thirty years, and they are very hard to know."

"Thirty years!" the professor gasped. The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

"It is as nothing. They are like children—it is hard to get at their real thoughts and feelings. I go among a tribe. I make friends with them, convert them, help them all I can. They come to me with their troubles, their grievances; I say 'do this, or do that,' and they obey. I think to myself, 'At last I know them and they love me. They are my children, I am their father!' And then some fine day—pouf! something happens and I find I know nothing about them; I am a stranger among them, and I must begin all over again."

The priest raised his eyes and looked around. Captain Whitney nodded appreciatively.

"That's just it," he said. "Now you know them and now you don't! There seems to be some invisible barrier between the Anglo-Saxon race and the Indian, and every now and then we come a cropper over it. We think we are going to spread the mantle of civilization over him and that it will fit very neatly, when suddenly we discover a bare place that hasn't been covered at all, and no matter how we twist and pull and tuck in that mantle, always an odd corner will stick out and show us that it is a misfit."

The professor looked a trifle dazed. He rubbed the bald spot on his head excitedly.

"Bless my soul!" he said; "I don't think I quite understand. If your language were a little less—ah—figurative——"

Allen saw his opportunity to laugh. He did so.

"Whitney's only trying to tell you, professor," he explained, "that although to all outward appearances the Indian is a commonplace, ordinary

enough individual, with many characteristics which we understand and recognize, and as guileless, seemingly, as Mr. Bret Harte's 'heathen Chinee,' yet at bottom he's as different from us as daylight is from darkness—I should say just the other way about. I don't mind confessing that he has frequently surprised *me* most considerably. Now, there was that curious affair of the Lost Mine——"

Captain Whitney held up a warning hand.

"Don't, don't, Allen! Not just yet. That story taxes the credulity of us who are used to the Indian—don't tell it to Professor Berwick yet. He'll only think you an unconscionable liar. Wait a while——"

"Yes," interrupted Stanway, "wait until he discovers that their religious traditions sound surprisingly like the Old Testament; that they know all about the flood and Noah and the Ark, and that it was a willow and not an olive branch the dove brought back, and that they have Masonic orders with proper degrees and grips and things, and that their prophets are wonderful old chaps and

could have given points to Hosea and the rest of them. It's the prophets I can't account for. But as I am a mere soldier and a sinful creature not to be implicitly believed, I let Father Lemaire vouch for them."

The priest shrugged his shoulders again.

"It *is* curious," he said, a little unwillingly; "and undoubtedly, although there have been false prophets among them as among the Jewish tribes, yet some of the Indian seers have a marvellous faculty for divining the future. You know their powers are quite distinct from those of the medicine-man. The good Father Charlevoix has left us many instances of such power, and I myself have known of many—" He hesitated slightly, as if uncertain whether to go on. The professor smiled indulgently on him.

"But of course such occurrences or coincidences are easily explained." The professor beamed around on the company. It was impossible that these men could seriously believe in Indian prophets.

"Doubtless, and it is to men of learning like

yourself that we look for the scientific explanation of such things." The priest looked calmly at the Oxford don as he spoke, and somehow his glance irritated that gentleman.

The professor cleared his throat and knocked the ash from his cigar.

"'Hem! Of course, it is to science that such phenomena must be referred for solution, but personally I have never given the subject any attention, and therefore it would be presumptuous on my part to offer any opinion. Perhaps Whitney here has an explanation——"

"Oh! as for me, I believe the true solution is the simple one that they are in league with the devil. It is very easy that way."

The priest laughed a little maliciously.

"Monsieur le capitaine will not be on your side, professor," he said. "He not only believes in them, but he has friends among them. By the way"—he looked at Whitney—"what has become of that Piegan, Swift Arrow? He was one of the most astonishing *Jossakeed* I have ever seen." He turned again to the professor. "I wish, monsieur, that you

could have seen that man and some of his prophetic manifestations. He is a devoted friend of Monsieur Whitney's. Ever since he was saved from transportation to Regina and the jail there by Monsieur le capitaine, he has worshipped him."

"Oh, nonsense!" interrupted Whitney, hastily; "it was only a trifling service for which he was absurdly grateful. You know they have such a horror of being sent out of their country. I have known them to die of nostalgia. I'll tell you all about a case like it some time, professor. As for Swift Arrow, I don't know where he is—haven't seen the beggar for as much as two years; haven't even heard of him. I think he has probably left these parts entirely."

Ericson, the orderly, was passing with a tray of clean glasses and a bottle of Scotch. He put up a hand to his mouth and coughed slightly to attract the captain's attention.

"Swift Arrow is in our shack, sir," he said. "He is come but fifteen minutes ago." Ericson was a Dane and proud of his English.

The professor leaned back heavily in his chair.

"Bless my soul!" he ejaculated; "this is rather extraordinary."

Ingalls was amused. He whispered to Stanway. "Another surprise for our doubting Thomas." Captain Whitney turned around in his chair.

"Speak of the devil! What does Swift Arrow want, Ericson?" he inquired.

The orderly grinned.

"He says, sir, that he wishes much to see Captain Wheetney; that the Great Spirit told him the captain had need of him to-night and he is come, but does not heemself know wherefore."

"Well, tell him that the Great Spirit must have been playing a little joke on him, for I haven't the least need of him, and that I will see him tomorrow. I can't bother with him now. See that he is all right for the night." Whitney smiled a little uncomfortably and the professor laughed triumphantly.

"Well," he remarked, pouring himself out a glass of Scotch, "it was rather peculiar his arriving while we were talking of him, but the revelations of the Great Spirit to him as to the future

were evidently not authentic this time. I suspect all of their communications are of about equal value." The professor was growing offensively complacent and positive.

"Why not have him in, Whitney, and let the old chap give us a *séance* for the benefit of the professor here?" suggested Allen.

But Whitney negatived the proposition emphatically.

"No, no! I won't have the old chap make an exhibition of himself for our pleasure. If there were any real reason—he's such a confoundedly dignified old beggar—I won't have him laughed at." He laughed himself a little uneasily. "After all, professor," he said, making an effort to turn the conversation, "I don't believe the prophetic power of the Indian is as wonderful as another curious little trick he possesses of sending intelligence from one point to another with the most baffling rapidity and absolutely without messengers or signal so far as anyone has discovered. It's quite wonderful, I assure you, and sometimes occasions us no end of trouble."

"'Deed, that's so," chimed in Stanway, pushing his coffee-cup away and tilting his chair back comfortably. "The beggars are better at that mental telegraphy business than at anything else. Why, last year Steele, down at the fort, chased a half-breed for two whole weeks before he came up with the ruffian. No matter what trail he took the Indian always got word somehow of his approach and escaped. Steele never knew how. He doubled and twisted on his own tracks, but the Indian always seemed to know beforehand what he was going to do and would get away."

The professor leaned forward on the table.

"This is indeed interesting, gentlemen. Do any of the rest of you know of similar instances?"

Stanway leaned toward Ingalls. "Your man's beginning to take notice," he said.

Berwick had addressed the priest, who looked up quietly.

"Oh, yes," he said, indifferently; "many have been brought to my knowledge. We are waiting for science to give us a lucid and satisfactory expla-

nation of them," and again he looked quizzically at the professor, who reddened slightly.

"I think—" began Allen.

"Sh!" Captain Whitney held up a warning hand. "What's that?" he said, and pushed his chair back from the table. Outside could be heard, coming nearer and nearer to the shack, the galloping of a horse, then, "Whoa! steady, there!" and the sound of a man leaping to the ground.

Ericson presented himself at the door.

"An orderlee from the post with message for Captain Wheetney."

He saluted and stood aside to let the orderly, covered with dust and tired out from his thirty-mile ride, pass in.

Captain Whitney ran his eye hastily over the letter the man handed him.

"Do you know anything of the contents of this despatch?" he asked, sharply.

"No, sir."

"Ericson, take the orderly to your quarters and see that he is comfortable. Tell Sergeant Owens to report to me in fifteen minutes, ready for service."

The two orderlies disappeared to wash out their throats and make themselves otherwise "comfortable." Captain Whitney read the letter over again, and then leaning forward on the table, the paper held up to the light, he looked around at his guests.

"Gentlemen," he said, and there was a queer little thrill of excitement in his voice. "I have just received a communication which is rather curious in view of our recent conversation, and which, as I am convinced you will preserve absolute secrecy on the subject, I will read you. The letter is from Wainwright, at Fort Donald, and is dated six o'clock this evening.

"To Inspector Whitney, Highwood Detachment.

"Sir: I have just received a telegram from Inspector Burke, of the Banff detachment, apprising me of the murder, at four this afternoon, of a private, Thomas Dolan, in his division, by White Crow, a notorious Indian of that district. He has received most reliable information that the Indian has started eastward, and by this time is in hiding with some of his people at a little place called Roy, fifty miles from there. As he feels confident that any

approach from his detachment on the west would be immediately reported to the Indian in that mysterious fashion known to them, and so cause him to change his place of hiding, he decided to wire me the particulars, have me send a messenger immediately to you, and order you northward to capture White Crow. As it is absolutely impossible that the Indians to the south should have heard of the murder, your move to the northward will not attract any attention or be reported to him. News of the affair in all quarters has been carefully suppressed, so that if you move quickly and cautiously you will undoubtedly come upon White Crow near Roy.

"The orderly leaves here in half an hour and should be with you by ten this evening. He knows nothing of the affair.

"WAINWRIGHT,
"Inspector."

Captain Whitney glanced at his watch. It was just four minutes of ten. The orderly rode well.

"You will have to excuse me, gentlemen," he said, rising from the table. "I have much to attend to before starting, and we must get away as soon as possible. I hope, however, that you will stay and finish out the evening."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the professor, "you don't mean to say, Whitney, that you are going to start out over the trackless prairie in the dead of night after an Indian murderer?"

Whitney smiled.

"What did you expect? That I should wait here until these Indians get wind of the affair and let the man know that I am on his trail? Besides, the prairie isn't trackless. People talk ingenuously of the 'trackless prairie.' The trouble with it is that there are so many tracks that we need a guide—" He stopped suddenly and struck his hands sharply together. "By Jove, I had entirely forgotten! Both the Indian guide and the interpreter are away. Lost Arm is at Lethbridge and won't be here until to-morrow noon, and I let the interpreter go home to see his family to-night. It's entirely too far to send for him."

Father Lemaire looked at Whitney.

"Perhaps, after all, Swift Arrow's arrival was opportune. You couldn't find a better guide," he said, quietly.

Allen gave a nervous little laugh.

"By Jove, it's just like a fairy tale! The Great Spirit must have given him a tip as to your difficulty to-night, after all, Whitney."

Whitney stood looking down, twisting the letter absently in his fingers.

"Just the man," he said. "And I need a guide badly. Never heard of Roy, but if it's fifty miles east of Banff it must be at least a hundred and five or ten miles from here."

There was a knock at the door and Sergeant Owens came in.

"Owens, bring Swift Arrow in here. I wish to speak with him."

In an instant the man was back, followed by a tall Indian, who walked noiselessly in his doeskin moccasins. He was an old man, but as straight and quick as one of his own arrows.

"How!" he said, gravely.

They returned his salutation and Whitney gave him tobacco. They all smoked in silence for a few minutes.

"Swift Arrow," said Whitney, at length, "Lost Arm is in Lethbridge and I wish to go at once to

Roy on particular business. Do you know where Roy is? Can you guide me? The pay is good."

The Indian blew a great cloud of smoke through his beaked nose.

"Good—much good that I come to-night, much good that I listen to Manitou," he said, tranquilly. "No pay for Swift Arrow. He goes for love of white friend. Roy far off—hundred mile 'cross prairie. The pale face," he pointed with the stem of his pipe toward the professor, "will ride, too. He much tired."

"God bless my soul!" ejaculated the astonished professor; "I hope I shall do no such thing."

The Indian glanced at him carelessly. "Yes," he said, with conviction.

The Catholic priest looked over at the professor.

"Why not?" he asked. "Since knowledge of the Indian is what Monsieur le Professeur seeks, why should he not go on this expedition. It is not so dangerous. It will teach him many things."

"Of course you'll go, Professor," urged Ingalls. "It will really be tremendously interesting, and Whitney will be glad of company."

The captain looked doubtfully at his guest. He was wondering whether he could ride.

"Delighted to take him along," he said, uncertainly.

"Easy horse for pale face—old bones very tired." Swift Arrow spoke lazily through a cloud of tobacco smoke.

The professor glared indignantly at the Indian.

"Confound his impudence! I'll go, if it's only to show that Indian I can ride," he declared, hotly.

Allen laughed.

"That's right, Professor. Do him up. All Indians are awfully stuck on their ridin'."

"Very well," said Whitney, still doubtfully. "We start at three. It's hardly worth while setting out sooner, as it is the dark of the moon, and we couldn't see our horses' heads before us. You'd better get as much rest as possible before then, Professor. Ericson, you and Owens put up some rations and get the tents and ponies in readiness, and speak to no one of this expedition. I have letters to write and a report to finish. Stanway, will you be host in my absence?"

It was three o'clock when they started, Swift Arrow riding slightly in front, followed by Captain Whitney and Berwick, with Sergeant Owens in the rear. The professor was really an excellent horseman, and had no difficulty in keeping up with the stiff pace set by the Indian. They rode silently, for the world was asleep and deep shadows hung over the land. And when the sun came slowly up they were still held silent by the beauty of it all. The heavy purple clouds, paling slowly to amethyst and then to turquoise before the advancing light, were pierced here and there by long shafts of gold. Far overhead in the cool air, plovers with their sad cry dipped and circled about. Once they passed a small lake with teal and wild duck upon it. On the sides of the *coulées* great bushes of prairie roses grew and flung out their fragrance, and millions of forget-me-nots blossomed under their horses' feet. Drowsy cattle stirred here and there, "rustling" in the short, sweet prairie-grass. It was a silent, beautiful world they galloped through that June morning.

When the day had fully dawned they drew rein

for breakfast, and at noon they rested again for an hour, for it was very hot. Late in the afternoon they came upon a little open space, surrounded by cotton-woods, and near a stream where Captain Whitney thought it would be well to camp for the night.

The sergeant was putting up the two tents they had brought and Captain Whitney was hobbling his horse, when suddenly Swift Arrow, who was watching the operations from afar, came close up to the officer.

"Not go any farther now—stay here?" he asked, spreading out his hands.

The captain nodded.

"We are all tired out and must rest to-night. Hold up your hoof, Duke."

Swift Arrow regarded him a moment. "Indians right behind—ride fast, Indians."

Captain Whitney straightened up with a start.

"What! You don't mean we are followed? Who could have known?"

The Indian shrugged his shoulders.

"Ye-es—that right—Indians after us. Maybe they get to Roy first."

"But *how* do you know?" The officer's voice shook with impatience. The Indian only regarded him quietly with a blank expression on his face.

"White man don' see all Indian sees," he remarked, impassively. Captain Whitney looked at the A tent and the hobbled horses in perplexity and chagrin. And then an idea struck him, but he determined to keep it even from Swift Arrow for the present.

Supper was over and the horses had been fed and watered and had had three hours' rest, when Captain Whitney left the professor and went through the inky darkness over to the bell tent, where the sergeant and Swift Arrow were already soundly sleeping. He raised the flap and entered. First he shook Owens by the arm, and when he got the private aroused he bent over the sleeping Indian and called to him softly. The man sprang up.

"I want you, Swift Arrow," said the captain, "to go and get our horses and saddle them quickly —all but Owens's. He is going to stay here while

we push on. I am hoping to deceive the Indians on our trail—whoever the beggars are and wherever they are—into thinking we have camped for the night, and so get far ahead of them."

The Indian grunted.

"Good—much good," he said, and moved noiselessly out into the night.

"You, Owens, are to stay here and keep the fires going and move about as much as you can. Try and be four men, if possible."

Owens saluted sleepily, and the captain went back to his tent and the professor, who was sitting on his saddle-cloth in the most uncomfortable position and looking moody but game.

"How d'y' suppose they found out we had started, and how on earth did Swift Arrow, or whatever the chap's name is, find out that they had found out? It beats me. He was with us the whole way and *I* never saw a thing." There was a touch of irritation in the professor's voice. A gentleman and an Oxford don does not thoroughly enjoy being mystified by an ignorant savage.

"Give it up," said Whitney, affably. "Here's

Swift Arrow for your saddle-blankets. He's getting the horses ready."

It was intensely dark when they set out again, and they had to ride slowly. It seemed as if the Indian must have had some sixth sense to be able to guide them at all. Twice, indeed, they lost the trail and had to retrace part of the way, and once the professor's horse stepped into a badger-hole and nearly threw his rider. When the dawn began to break again they rode more rapidly. Suddenly Swift Arrow drew rein and pointed far down on his right to a group of brightly painted tepees nestled against the side of a steep *coulée*. A mile or so farther on, Whitney and the professor could see where the level line of the prairie was broken by a little settlement of rough, newly built frame houses. Evidently that was Roy, and the Indian village nearer them the hiding place of White Crow.

They rode straight for the tepees, and as they neared them they could see that, early as it was, the place was wide-awake. Young bucks were leading their ponies down to water and the squaws

were making fires and hanging pots above them. Fat, brown Indian babies toddled about among the dogs and horses in a reckless fashion. Captain Whitney halted before the largest and most brilliantly decorated tepee. An old Indian, evidently the chief, sat in front of it smoking. The officer beckoned to Swift Arrow to interpret.

"Tell him that I come to arrest White Crow, whom I know to be here, for the murder of a private soldier at Banff. Tell him I wish the man given up at once and peaceably."

The Indian translated. Though it was the first he had heard of the murder, his impassive face betrayed not a trace of curiosity. The chief smoked on tranquilly.

"Tell him to give me his answer immediately, Swift Arrow." The officer was becoming impatient.

The old chief removed his pipe from his lips for a moment.

"Tell the White Mother's servant, who moves as slowly as a half-frozen bear in winter, that his quarry is gone. White Crow did, indeed, come among us late yesterday, but a swift-winged mes-

sage breathed in his ear and he rode away quickly. Whither he went I did not ask and do not know." He resumed his pipe impassively, while Swift Arrow translated what he had said.

"Tell him I must have the camps searched, that I do not believe White Crow can have got away."

For an instant the old man's eyes blazed at the message, then arising, gravely, he led the way to each tepee, ordering the young Indians out and aiding in the thorough search. At the end of half an hour it was evident that White Crow was not there and that none of the Indians knew where he was.

"'Pon my word, this thing grows uncanny." The professor's teeth chattered audibly as he spoke. Perhaps it was the effect of the keen morning air.

"It's most vexatious, I know that! If I had not been so sure of catching him here I would have brought more men. As it is, there aren't enough of us to divide up into search parties, and we shall have to go to Calgary to get help or back to the detachment."

"My dear Whitney, it's a very small matter

whether you catch this man or not. What *I* want to know is by what mysterious agency he was apprised of our coming!"

"As an officer of the Mounted Police, naturally my point of view differs from yours," said the captain, stiffly. "However, if you want to find out about the psychological, or scientific, or whatever you choose to call it, aspect of the thing, why don't you go and interview the chief?"

Berwick thought the advice good, and taking Swift Arrow with him, went over to where the chief sat smoking again as tranquilly as though nothing had happened. He did not find out much, though. All the information he could extract from the taciturn old warrior was conveyed in a single enigmatical sentence.

"The voice of the messenger glides swiftly over the land and breathes in the ear of the listening brave. Like the lightning it flashes across the plains and mountains. More than that I do not know."

The professor went back to Whitney.

"The beggar won't tell me a thing," he de-

clared, testily, "and he has the audacity to use semi-scientific terms in describing the phenomenon. Talks about lightning flashing across the plain. He might be describing wireless telegraphy! Bless my soul! If I stay in this country much longer I won't know what to think." The professor's intellect was expanding in leaps and bounds and it was most uncomfortable and perplexing.

The captain laughed ruefully. "I don't know what to think now," he said. "All I know is that our cattle are completely used up, not to mention ourselves, and that White Crow has been informed of our search and escaped. We shall have to stay here half the day anyway to be able to move at all. Confound that Indian! If I only knew where he was!"

The professor looked out through the entrance of the tent across the prairie.

"Why don't you ask Swift Arrow where he is? The gentleman seems to know everything." The professor essayed a flippant tone, but Whitney was not deceived. The leaven was working.

"By Jove, not a bad idea," he said, and went to

the door of the tent, which the Indian had put up. Swift Arrow was outside and walked quietly to meet Whitney. From his place in the tent the professor could see them speaking together earnestly, and at first the Indian seemed to protest, but finally, making a gesture of assent, he followed Whitney slowly back. The officer threw himself down by Berwick.

"Prepare yourself, Professor," he said, smiling a little uncertainly. "After all, you are going to have a chance of finding out what an Indian prophet is worth. We are going to have a *séance* with the Great Spirit, the Gitchi Manitou. Swift Arrow didn't want to do it much at first, but his gratitude for the little service I did him—you remember the Regina affair—finally overcame his scruples about assisting in the arrest of this brother Indian, and so he is going to hold a conference with the powers that be and find out just where White Crow is. It can't do any harm and it will fill up the time while we wait," he added, avoiding the professor's eye. The professor looked at him sharply.

"Don't pretend that you don't believe in this thing, Whitney! Why, man, I'm getting downright superstitious myself."

The captain chuckled a little and watched Swift Arrow out of the corner of his eye. The man was going quietly about clearing a space in the corner of the tent. Over this he spread carefully a heavy blanket which he had worn thrown about his shoulders during the night ride, and having removed his shaps, moccasins, and shirt, he lay down upon it. Drawing the four corners together, he wrapped himself tightly in it. To the two men watching him, it looked as if the Indian had fallen quickly asleep, but in a few moments he became very pale, drops of perspiration broke out on his forehead, and he began to mutter incoherently.

The sides of the tent were drawn up, for it was intensely hot, and the Indians came and gathered about the tepee, staring at the pallid figure stretched out on the ground. The old chief took his station at the entrance and smoked pipeful after pipeful of *kinni-kinnic*.

For an hour and more Swift Arrow lay in a stu-

por, muttering unintelligibly, his limbs now and then twitching convulsively. Captain Whitney was intensely bored. He felt extremely ridiculous in his own sight, and assured himself over and over that only the impossibility of getting away with his used-up horses prevented his ordering Swift Arrow to break off his conference with the Great Spirit and strike the tent. He pretended to sleep, but was really wide-awake and listening to the suppressed hum of conversation from the Indians surrounding the tepee. The professor was writing vigorously in his note-book and trying to appear unconcerned. In reality he, too, was nervous as a cat, and his mind in a state bordering on revolution.

Suddenly Swift Arrow gave a wild cry, and, leaping to his feet, threw off the blanket and stood in the centre of the tent. Great rivulets of perspiration rolled off his body, his face was pallid, and a light froth lay on his lips. He passed his hand slowly across his forehead as if stupefied, but his eyes were preternaturally bright. The frightened Indians crowding around the tent fell back a little at the sight. Whitney and the professor sat up

stiffly, awaiting what was to come. There was a little mocking smile on the officer's face, but Berwick was extremely serious. If there was anything in the exhibition the professor was determined to find out what it might be.

Swift Arrow stood for a moment passing and repassing his hand across his eyes, then he motioned to the Indians outside to leave the tent. When they had all gone away he sat down beside the English officer and began to smoke. For a few seconds he was silent, then, laying aside his pipe, he leaned forward and began to speak rapidly in short jerky sentences.

"The Great Spirit has talked with me. To-night, at dark, you will find White Crow at Morlon's—he half-breed. Forty mile from here to south, at foot of great Rockies. Swift Arrow knows place well. Down by *coulée*."

Captain Whitney looked straight ahead of him.

"Do you mean that White Crow has doubled back and gone southwest for forty miles to the foothills?"

The Indian nodded.

"And shall we come up with him toward dusk at the half-breed Morlon's?"

The Indian nodded again, and, picking up his pipe of *kinni-kinnic*, strode out of the tent.

The professor looked over at Whitney.

"Shall we try it?" he asked, excitedly. Captain Whitney smiled doubtfully.

"I say, Whitney, really I think we might as well see what's in it." The professor's voice was urgent and the captain could not help smiling.

"Very well, I had already decided to wire Burke and go back to the detachment, so that it will be but little out of the way. If we don't catch him—if—if Swift Arrow here is simply having a little fun with us, I can wire him from the post, and if we are to get there by dusk we will have to leave here a little after three. I propose that we get some good rest until then."

It was almost four when the tired little party started south again, and twenty times as they galloped across the hot prairie Captain Whitney changed his mind as to whether to follow Swift

Arrow's lead. But almost before he knew it they had left the direct southern trail and were veering off to the right, straight toward the Rockies. Glad that the thing had been decided for him, he rode mechanically forward, his eyes dazzled by the splendor of the afternoon sun that shone full in his face.

They rode so for several hours and dark had descended upon them when the Indian, turning sharply to the right, led the way down a rocky road to the bed of a mountain stream, and there on its bank they suddenly came upon the little shack of Morlon, the French half-breed.

"Bless my soul, Whitney, this is the loneliest and most God-forsaken spot I ever saw!" The professor spoke in a whisper. The desolate aspect of the place seemed to compel silence.

"Wait here," said the captain to Berwick and the Indian, and he rode alone up to the door of the shack. He knocked, and in an instant the tall figure and unprepossessing face of Morlon appeared. The man held a candle in his hand, and by its light Whitney could see that he was about equally

frightened and relieved at the sight of his uniform.

"I want White Crow, the Indian, who is hiding here," he said, briefly.

The man's hand shook so that the wax of the candle spilled over.

"I—he—is not—why do you think he is here?"

"Come," commanded Whitney, sternly, "give him up at once or I will arrest you, too."

The man pointed over his shoulder to an inner room.

"He is in there," he said, in a frightened voice. "I did not want him to come. Bad Indian. He told me he kill me if I not hide him. He just come—little while ago. I don' want him."

He stepped discreetly and hastily out of the house while Captain Whitney went in to get the Indian. White Crow made no resistance, rather to the professor's regret—he had followed Captain Whitney into the shack—and they easily made him their prisoner. He had not slept and had scarcely tasted food for fifty hours, and there was no fight left in him.

"By Jove, I'm glad we have got this fellow at last!" said Whitney. They were in the corral slipping the saddles off their tired ponies preparatory to having a good night's rest at the half-breed's shack.

"My dear fellow," remarked the professor, testily, "as I before said, catching him is a secondary matter. The thing that interests me is the way in which he has been found. I have thought of it from every conceivable point of view, and can make nothing of it. It's most extraordinary—most extraordinary!"

Whitney laughed. "My dear professor, you must not take this affair too seriously. It was in all probability a mere accident, a coincidence, if you will, strange but perfectly explicable. Men like you and myself don't believe in the supernatural."

"But all truth-searching minds are open to conviction, no matter what their previous prejudices may be. Do you mean to tell me that the events which have taken place since night before last—the unexpected and timely appearance of the Indian, Swift Arrow, the communication from your

superior officer pertinent to the very conversation in hand, the seemingly sure official intelligence directing us to Roy and the mysterious communication of our approach to the murderer, the absolute lack of knowledge of his whereabouts, and his location by this Indian prophet—" The professor was sputtering and breathless.

Whitney laughed heartlessly again. "I repeat that while it seems strange it may all have been a coincidence. There was nothing particularly wonderful in Swift Arrow's visit to the detachment. I had not seen him for a long while—it was time for him to turn up. As for White Crow's escape from Roy—he may never have been there. These Indians are awful liars. They saw that we expected to find him there, and they may have concluded that it would bring less suspicion upon them to say that he had been there, but had gone, than to deny his ever having been there. As for his presence here that may have been only a lucky guess on Swift Arrow's part. Morlon may be friendly with that particular Indian, and if he is, depend on it, every other Indian knows it. His place is secluded and

Swift Arrow may have very shrewdly surmised that he would come to him in trouble—"

"Of all narrow-minded, bigoted, conventional, hard-headed, doubting idiots, commend me to an Englishman!"

"Oh, come, Berwick!" Whitney was laughing so he could hardly speak. "How about scientists?"

"Who's talking about scientists? Science be damned!" said the professor, recklessly and emphatically, and he followed the captain into the shack.

VI

THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

I

CORPORAL JONES, Division D, Northwest Mounted Police (whose real name, by the way, was the Honorable St. John Annesley and whose uncle just then happened to be Secretary for His Majesty's Colonies), balanced himself recklessly on the edge of a huge water-barrel and gazed, with a rueful expression on his boyish face, through the little window of the shack at a pile of breakfast dishes which awaited his attention. From time to time he would remove the brierwood pipe he was smoking and swear, softly but energetically, at the stained coffee-cups and coarse plates heaped with the remains of the mess breakfast. After half an hour of this gloomy meditation he suddenly swung himself down from the water-barrel, and, hesitating an instant to stifle the call of duty,

turned his back on the barracks and strolled slowly toward the river, which ran, deep and swift, within a few yards of the detachment.

As Annesley—or Jones, as his recruiting papers had it—stood watching the rapid rush of the North Saskatchewan a big mastiff appeared around the corner of the distant stables, and, seeing the solitary figure, trotted briskly up and laid a cold muzzle in his master's hand.

"Down, Kootenai!"

The dog sank, with a low growl of protestation, at the trooper's feet, but kept a bright eye open for any sign of encouragement. It came soon. Annesley seated himself on a fallen tree-trunk and looked down at the mastiff.

"You're a good dog, Kootenai," he said, aloud, meditatively. At this Kootenai sat up joyously on his haunches and gurgled, and laid his folded paws on the trooper's knee.

"You're a good dog," he repeated, and there was a note of bitterness in his voice as he went on, "You are honest; you haven't pretended to love me, and then at the first slip thought the worst of

me, and disbelieved me, and kicked me out. Oh, no! I know you love me better than anything in the world, and that you would be willing to risk your life to do my bidding. Wait—I'll see—I'm getting cynical! Perhaps I'm mistaken even in dog nature."

He broke off a small branch of the fallen cotton-wood and, tying his handkerchief about it, threw it into the swift current. With one bound the mastiff flung himself into the seething water, and began to battle up-stream with powerful strokes to meet the stick. Soon he was back at Annesley's feet with the prize, shaking—for the water was bitterly cold—and threshing the big drops from his coat.

"You're a good dog, Kootenai," said Annesley, once more, "and you are my best friend—in fact, my only friend 'at this present,' as the prayer-book says." He gave a look around at the vast, absolutely solitary scene about him.

"It was great luck to meet with you when I arrived here six months ago, I assure you," Annesley went on gravely to the dog, who sat up and

paid strict attention to what his master was saying to him. "You were then an extremely fine puppy of nine months, well-grown and quite powerful for your age, but hardly able to get back at that brute of a master of yours. It was very, very kind of you to allow me to buy you and so gain a friend. By the way, it sounds rather curious to talk of buying friends, doesn't it, Kootenai? But you need not shake your head and look so incredulous. It's no stranger than to discover that one's own people are not one's friends. Oh, I don't mean the mater —she was all right, of course; I shouldn't wonder if she were breaking her heart over me now. But the governor—phew! Well, I think I would rather rely on your friendship, that I bought and paid for, than on his. And it wasn't such an unforgivable crime, either, Kootenai. I've known heaps of chaps to do worse things, and—oh! I don't mean to excuse myself. I know I was several dozen kinds of a fool for breaking my university career in two like that, and getting in such a mess, and disgracing the family, and all that. And yet if the governor had only had a little patience, hadn't

said all those nasty things—I couldn't half explain—but never mind that.

"I believe that I was saying that I was glad to meet you on my arrival here. You see, I am pretty far from home, old fellow—some odd thousand miles—not that I want to go back. Oh, no! don't misunderstand me so greatly. Never mind that, either. But this is such a drear, out-of-the-world sort of place! Some years ago, before people knew as much as they think they do now, Kootenai, it was the general opinion that the earth was square. Since being out here I have concluded that the old-fashioned people knew the real facts of the case, and that the world *is* square and that we have struck the edge of it. I am quite sure that just beyond these mountains"—the dog turned his head in the direction Annesley pointed, and looked understandingly and sympathetically at the distant Rockies—"is the jumping-off place. I think it highly probable that some day I shall go there and—jump off. But wherever I go, you shall go, too, old fellow."

The dog gave a joyous bark and dropped on

his four feet as Annesley arose and looked about him.

"Why, it's summer!" he said. His voice had lost some of its monotony and there was a barely perceptible thrill of interest in it. "No more snow and cold until next year. The fierce Canadian winter must be greatly exaggerated. Here it is early April and it feels like June in England. When June really does come, Kootenai, we'll get our leave and explore the edge of the world and life will be worth living again. In the meantime, Privates McNair, Ruggles, and Warren having set off on their daily fifteen-mile circuit, it is our duty to clear up the mess breakfast and take care of the barracks. To-morrow it will be my turn to go off, and Constable McNair will have the exquisite pleasure of washing my plate and cup." He gave another look across the prairie, shrugged his shoulders, laid his hand on the dog's head, and walked slowly toward the shack.

It was, as Annesley had said, early April, and it was true that no snow was to be seen and that the air was as warm and soft as in summer. There

was the fresh earthy smell that comes with the spring, and here and there tiny patches of green showed in the sodden brown of the prairie. Rivers and streams ran swiftly with the rush of melting snows, and the mournful call of hungry cattle as they "rustled" for their food had ceased. But anyone save an inexperienced new-comer in that country would have known that summer was still far, far to the south of the Saskatchewan, and that it was only the tricky Chinook wind which had come, and, breathing for a day and a night on the snow, had dissipated it as if by magic. Had Annesley been in Alberta a year, instead of six months, he would have known that many more snows were to fall before the short, hot Canadian summer would really come.

It seemed to Annesley a criminal thing that four men should use such a vast quantity of plates and cups and knives and forks for so simple a meal as their breakfast had been, and at moments it looked as if a "break-up of china" was imminent. At other times, a settled despair taking possession of him, all effort was abandoned and gloomy inactivity

reigned. At rare intervals in his never-ending task Annesley broke into song:

"A life in a half-breed shack,
When the rain begins to fall,
And the drip, drip on the floor,
And the wind comes through the door!
The tenderfoot curses his luck
And cries out feebly, 'Ah!
The bloomin' country's a fraud,
And I want to go home to mamma!
Yah! yah! I want to go home to mamma!
Yah! yah! I want to go home to mamma!'

"He saddled a fiery cayuse,
Intending to flourish around,
The buzzardhead starts in to buck,
And deposits him flop on the ground.
He picks himself up in a hurry,
And cries out feebly, 'Ah!
The bloomin' country's a fraud,
And I want to go home to mamma!
Yah! yah! I want to go home to mamma!
Yah! yah! I want to go home to mamma!'"

Annesley sang it dreamily in a rich baritone to the tune of "Life on the Ocean Wave." He had learned it from McNair, who had an excruciating voice, which he exercised, greatly to Annesley's in-

dignation, every evening. Still, before the interminable winter was over, Annesley had grown positively thankful for the robustness and unfailing quantity of McNair's voice, and every evening they had a "sing-song" in their lonely little detachment on the banks of the North Saskatchewan.

A private in the Mounted Police will tell you that the difference between a detachment and a post is that there is no drill and guard-mount at the former, and he will always choose it if he has enough pull to get sent where he wishes. Annesley had not elected to go to the North Saskatchewan for these reasons, but because he wished to get as far away from his world and his people as possible. Apparently he had succeeded, for the little detachment stood, a tiny whitewashed spot on the prairie, fifty miles from the nearest post and two hundred from the railway and a telegraph office—for this was several years ago, before the Canadian Pacific had stretched out a feeler as far to the north as Edmonton. For six months of the year—the six months that Annesley had spent in the Northwest—the detachment was cut off from the

rest of the world. It would be difficult to conceive of a more complete exile than he had voluntarily entered into.

But the absolute loneliness of the life suited him. There is a sickness of the soul best cured by utter solitude, and Annesley was able to take his cure in large doses. With the exception of the rare visits made by the inspector from the post and the occasional appearance of Indian runners sent with messages and provisions, nothing broke the monotony of the winter days. As for the interior of the shack, it had become so familiar that Annesley could have shut his eyes and reproduced every detail—the iron cots in the four corners; the racks above them filled with arms, and the kit-bags rolled neatly under each; the rough walls ornamented with coyote skins and eagles' wings and pictures of celebrated music-hall actresses (for McNair was a patron of several of the arts); the bear rugs on the floor and the rough seat by one of the windows, whereon reposed in state McNair's well-worn guitar and a banjeurine which Annesley had brought with him but which he rarely touched.

Annesley went about now—the dishes being finished after a fashion—putting the familiar things in their places, giving a lightning-like touch with the broom to the floor and straightening the chairs and tables. After that he seated himself at the open window, and, with one eye on the greening prairie, began to study the "Manual of Arms."

Section 7. Regulations for Sergeants.

"Sergeants will stand at ease and come to attention with the men; they will also shoulder, slope, and order or trail arms with them."

Annesley scowled fiercely at the unoffending "Manual." He skipped a few pages and halted at "Questions in Aiming Drill."

"What is the object of aiming drill?"

"If a recruit cannot close his left eye at first, what is done?"

A puff of the soft Chinook breeze came in at the window, and Annesley shut the book with a resounding whack.

"Oh, bother!" he said, and leaned far out on the

sill to catch the first fragrance of the spring air. Then he got up and walked restlessly about the room. Suddenly his eye caught sight of a big, square package lying tucked away under a corner of the table. It had been brought in by an Indian runner a few days before, and had lain there unopened. Annesley knew what was in it, and, picking it up, he deposited it on the table and began to cut the heavy twine with which it was tied.

There are organizations of charitably inclined people in His Majesty's dominions who make it their business to send large consignments of books and old magazines and journals to the different army posts for distribution among the soldiers. This is undoubtedly a very generous idea, and has probably added largely to the private soldier's pleasure. In this case it happened to have the opposite effect. It killed Annesley. But of course that is not the fault of the charitably-minded individuals.

Annesley turned over the old magazines and the stray comic journals of the package indifferently at first. And then suddenly he stumbled upon an

old copy of a little country newspaper, and, as his trembling hands unfolded and spread it out, his eye caught sight of something that made him go white and grip the table hard to keep from falling over. And while he read the short paragraph over and over again, as if he had forgotten the English language and was trying to make sense out of strange foreign words, the room bulged out like a balloon being inflated and then contracted until the four whitewashed walls seemed about to crush him. An odd singing noise, that settled into a monotonous beat, made itself felt in his head.

Suddenly he pushed back his chair, and, rising unsteadily, he began to stagger around the little room, throwing open the windows and doors and taking short fierce gasps of the warm air. All at once he stopped, and, reaching for the paper, searched for the date. It was a month old. Annesley groaned. She was ill—perhaps dying—when that had been written. And she wanted *him*, and he was the cause of it all. Oh, yes! he could make out that much from the half-veiled personalities of the paragraph. She had "heart trouble," and un-

doubtedly he was the "unfortunate domestic affair" referred to. And they were hunting for him —it was evident that his father was as eager as anyone else to find him, perhaps to forgive him. Annesley laughed bitterly. He didn't care a hang whether his father wanted him or not, or whether he meant to forgive him or not. He was not sure whether he meant to forgive his father. But his mother! He shut his eyes and put his throbbing head in his hands, and again he could recall everything that had happened—the boyish escapade that had ended so disastrously; the imperative summons home and the quick journey down from Cambridge; the uncompromising attitude and look of his father as he stood before him in the library, and the pale, frightened, pleading face of his mother when the paternal storm burst in all its fury.

It was his mother he could see most distinctly, and her sorrowful face when he flung himself out of the house after having answered his father hotly. Oh! it was all a hideous blunder. If his father had only had a little patience, a little for-

bearance! He could have explained—in a measure; there was some extenuation. But no! he had been kicked out like a dog, and he was glad to be gone. And now—! A sob rose in his throat. He was very young and his mother was dying. Well, he would go to her and explain now, and beg her forgiveness, and try not to cause her any more unhappiness. But he would have to hurry! She was very ill, according to the little paper, and her heart—! It would be best not to telegraph. That might hurt her, and the long wait before he could get there would be too great a strain. No, he would go at once.

And then there suddenly swept over him a blind, terrifying sense of helplessness, the same sort of nameless fright that children feel in a dark shut-up room. It was as if he were trapped in some place and there was no light and no way out, for he suddenly realized that he was not free. He was bound in honor to stay where he was. It was useless to think of waiting for a furlough. It would take weeks to get it, even if, by good fortune, the authorities were willing to give it to him, which was

unlikely, as the Indians cause more trouble in the spring than during any other part of the year.

Was he, then, to stay tamely in that God-forsaken country, making no effort to get to his dying mother, who was longing to see him? He was like a man sick with fever, for he was shaking all over and his brain seemed on fire. He could not reason. He could only ask himself how he had come to give up his life to servitude in that little spot on the edge of the world. Everything that he had done and that had happened to him during that last year seemed suddenly as unreal as a dream. It was quite impossible that he had been fairly content that very morning—an hour before. It must have been someone else—everything had changed since then.

A sort of madness descended on the boy, and he reeled through the door out into the open. Even the vast and solitary prairie could not take away the feeling that he was trapped, a prisoner. The wind from the river rustled the bare branches of the cotton-woods on its banks, and the whinny of the troop-horses in the stables sounded faintly. Annes-

ley put his head down upon the sill of the window and tried to think. It was quite impossible that he should stay there. He must get away, at all costs, and reach London. It was equally impossible that he should reveal his identity, and lay bare the facts of the case to the authorities or appeal to his uncle. Either course would only bring added disgrace upon his name. There was nothing but desertion for him. That was all there was left to him, and, right or wrong, he had to go. It was incredible that any one should expect him to stay on under the circumstances.

"How!"

Annesley wheeled about, and, raising his head, saw an Indian runner standing within a few feet of him. He looked with miserable, troubled eyes at the man for a moment.

"Oh! it's the Sword," he said, and dropped his head in his hands again.

The Indian patted the ground softly with his moccasined foot, and looked uneasily at the bowed head on the open window-sill. Evidently something

was the matter and he was sorry. He had seen "Misteh Jones" at the post and whenever he had carried messages to the detachment during the winter, and he had liked him. On those occasions the white man had bestowed sundry moneys on the Indian, and the Sword had not forgotten. He stretched out a hand now, and, touching Annesley timidly on the arm, gave him a letter.

When Annesley had finished reading it, he slowly tore the paper into bits. His only hope was gone. The captain from the post, who was to have visited the North Saskatchewan detachment in two days, had been called hurriedly to Regina on business. He stood for a moment gazing on the ground where the scattered fragments of the letter lay, thinking hard. Then he lifted his eyes and looked at the Sword.

II

The Indian bore the scrutiny calmly. Annesley thought him the best and cleanest-looking Indian he had ever seen. As a rule, Indians are far removed from godliness in many ways. This In-

dian stood tall and straight in his doeskin shaps, magnificently embroidered and painted, from the sides of which dangled fine ermine tails. His red flannel shirt was partly concealed by a heavy blanket thrown about him. Over his shoulders hung a pair of snow-shoes; and in his hair an eagle's feather, inserted in a bone socket and tied on with a piece of yellow ribbon, nodded to the breeze. He did not look at all like the Indians in that part of the country. He was evidently a Piegan from the south. Annesley wondered why he had come to the North Saskatchewan and how long he had been there. If he were unfamiliar with the country—Annesley frowned as he thought of the possibility. He must find out all about the Sword and whether he would do. It was his only chance.

"*Pit!*" he said to the Indian and waved his hand toward the shack.

When the Sword had passed in, Annesley gave one look around at the prairie and river, and then he, too, went quickly in. From his own tobacco pouch he offered the Indian tobacco, and, passing into the kitchen, he set some strong tea to boiling.

He rightly reasoned that under the combined influence of *pistakan* and *sixikimmi skoonataps* an Indian will consent to almost anything.

But, after all, it was very difficult to persuade him. He was very cautious and he raised many objections to the plan. He did not give Annesley the one reason that would have weighed with him—that he was unfamiliar with the country to the south and east—but he gave him every other.

Annesley got up and went into the kitchen. He poured out a large cupful of boiling tea and put a dash of brandy in it. Coming back he handed it to the Indian.

"The Sword is not afraid?" he said, gravely, and there was a touch of scorn in his voice. The Indian stopped drinking.

"Sword 'fraid? Neva!" he said, and his eyes snapped.

But he was afraid—afraid because he knew; and he sat there, shuffling his moccasined feet, glancing stealthily at Annesley and taking great gulps of the strong tea to give himself courage. And all the while Annesley argued and bullied and

persuaded. It would be easy enough, he insisted, in that pleasant weather, to strike down through the open country to the southeast for three hundred miles, and catch the Canadian Pacific at Medicine Hat or Dunmore or Maple Creek. As soon as they got to the inhabited country along the line of the Canadian Pacific, Annesley would have no further need of a guide and the Sword could turn back. Of course there would be pursuit, but they would doubtless meet with many Indians, and should they be in danger of capture the Sword could quickly betake himself to his own people, and as for Annesley, he did not care particularly what happened to himself. He simply wanted to get to the railroad. Nothing was of any consequence beside that fact.

The Sword had stopped drinking tea and was smoking, meditating on the risks of Annesley's proposition.

"Much money?" he asked, at length. Annesley got up, and, going to his cot in the corner of the room, dragged out the kit-bag from beneath it. He took out a large leather purse, and emptied a

handful of gold and bank notes on the table before the Sword. They made an imposing pile in the opinion of the Indian, who had never before seen a tenth as much money at one time. He looked at it a long while, Annesley sitting opposite him and anxiously studying the impassive face. Suddenly he arose, and, stretching out a hand, raked in the pile of money as a croupier rakes it in on a roulette table.

"*Tsanistis?*" ("When?") he said, in a husky voice.

"To-night at twelve. Bring your own pinto, and I will ride one of the government horses. I will leave enough money to pay for it, here on the table, with McNair"—Annesley was talking half to himself. "Near the stables, you understand—on the far side by the cotton-woods."

The Indian bowed gravely and moved toward the door of the shack. As he passed Annesley the boy touched the snow-shoes that still dangled over the Sword's shoulder.

"*Akankouskiu,*" said the Indian, pointing to the sky.

Annesley laughed. "*Amaiksistuiu*" ("It is very warm"). The Indian shook his head.

"Snow—much snow yet. Summer not come," he said, and passed out.

Annesley could hear the dull tread of the pony's hoofs on the soft earth as he cantered off. He was glad the Sword had not elected to hang around the detachment all day, for he had much to do and many things to think about.

It was late when McNair and Ruggles and finally Warren straggled into the little detachment. They were tired and stiff with long riding, and their horses were tired and stiff, too, but the shack had never seemed so clean and bright and attractive to them, or "Jones" so good-natured and unreserved. It struck the others that he was making an odd sort of effort to be especially agreeable to them. And after their supper he took down his unused banjeurine and started the "sing-song," complimenting the power of McNair's voice (which seemed to be in inverse ratio to his bodily fatigue) and singing himself.

They were old Harrow songs he sang—Harrow

days were a perfect and bright memory—and his voice sounded beautifully sweet and rich.

"Three leagues to north of London town,
Harrow up on the Hill.
There stands a school of high renown,
Harrow up on the Hill.
Low at her feet the rolling shire,
Groves around her in green attire,
And soaring above her a silent spire,
Harrow up on the Hill.

"And if they ask what made her great,
Harrow up on the Hill,
Was it her riches, pride, or fate,
Harrow up on the Hill,
Say that she rose because she would,
Because her sons were wise and good,
And bound in closest brotherhood!
Harrow up on the Hill!"

McNair and the others had never been to a great public school, or indeed to any school for very long, but they could understand the thrill of the words and air and the odd little tremble of the singer's voice. But after the triumph of "Harrow Marches Onward," and the happy idiocy of "Thank Goodness! the Trials Are Finished," Annesley's mood seemed to change:

"Sow not in sorrow;
Fling your seed abroad and know
God sends to-morrow
The rain to make it grow!

"The past no prayer can bring again,
The future cheats the scheming brain,
The present with its golden grain
Is garnered by the wise"——

The uncertain chords in the banjo ceased, and Annesley stood up.

"Good night," he said; "I'm tired and sleepy, and I know you are, too." He went around and shook hands with each of the three men, and they turned in, wondering a little at "Jones'" unusual friendliness.

It was very trying to lie still and listen to the regular, deep breathing of Warren and Ruggles and the profound snoring of McNair; and at last, in an agony of impatience and restlessness, Annesley got up, and, slipping noiselessly into his clothing, passed out of the shack. As he went by the table he laid two envelopes upon it. One was directed to McNair, and contained the price of his horse, with instructions to send the money to the

post; and the other was to the inspector. It was only a short note, telling him that it was absolutely necessary for him to leave at once, and that no power or obligation or official duty could keep him back, but that he would return as soon as possible and bear his punishment. And he asked him to believe in him till then.

At the corner of the shack a dark figure sprang up and brushed against Annesley, and then followed him quietly across the open. At the stables Annesley stopped and looked down in perplexity at the dog. The dog wagged an anxious tail and gave a low whine.

"So be it," said Annesley. He leaned against the building, and as he stood the night wind beat upon his hot forehead and the quick pulses in his temples, and for the first time since his reckless resolution of the morning a sobering sense of what he was about to do dawned upon him. It had always been his nature to rush into or away from difficulties. But while he wavered, the horror of the thought that his mother might die without seeing him struck in upon him with redoubled force. Well

—he could see no other way out. A boy had to go to his dying mother—it was his first and highest duty. What was a lot of official red tape in comparison with that? Every moral barrier of his nature was down, and the one wild impulse that ruled him was the impulse to get away.

He passed into the stables. In a moment he had found the bundle he had hidden there in the afternoon, and was getting quickly into an old gray shooting-suit he had brought with him from England. Then he made another bundle of his uniform, and, tying it to his saddle with a package of food he had put up, he waited for the Sword. The Indian was not long in coming, and Annesley, leading his bay quietly out of the stable, met him by the cotton-woods.

It was a soft, starlit night, and the air was almost warm even at that late hour. Neither Annesley nor the Sword spoke. Without a word they turned their horses toward the open prairie and started them on their long ride. Once Annesley looked back and could just distinguish in the dim light the outlines of the white shack.

They rode on for two hours, the even, easy canter of the ponies, the rhythmic dull ring of their hoofs on the soft prairie grass, and the quick rush of the big mastiff beside them, making Annesley's tired brain grow drowsy. Indeed, he must have slept, for suddenly a hand was on his bridle and he was startled to find that it was quite light, that the stars had paled from the sky, and the dawn was advancing in gold and purple splendor up the east.

He looked about him. On his right was a dense grove of willows and cotton-woods, and from beyond came the sound of a turbulent little stream. The Indian was already off his pony and was removing the saddle and bridle. Annesley jumped down and, leading his horse, followed the Sword down to the water. He unfastened his bundle containing his uniform and threw it into the river. While the horses were drinking, the Indian explained that they must stay there until the afternoon and let the horses rest and graze. They needed food and sleep themselves. As for Kootenai, he was quite worn out. In the afternoon they would push on.

It was three when they started, and the day, which had been so bright and sunny in the morning, had grown dull and gray. Annesley noticed that the Indian glanced anxiously at the sky from time to time. Suddenly the warm air, which had followed them, seemed to die away as if by magic, and a chill wind sprang up from the east and slapped them in the face as they rode. And from little spurts and gusts it settled into a steady, ceaseless roar that grew keener and keener and made them bend low over the saddles. The horses fought gamely against it, but it was hard work. As they struggled forward it seemed as if the whole world lay before them, over whose measureless, unbroken stretches the wind thundered with relentless force. Suddenly the mad wind died down, and as suddenly the darkening air was filled with whirling flakes of snow. The wind had accomplished its end—it had brought the storm—and so swept on.

For a few minutes neither Annesley nor the Indian spoke, and in that time the brown, dried prairie disappeared beneath a fleecy covering, and a thick, shifting curtain of white drew about them,

shutting out all the world. The Sword pulled on the pinto's bit and halted.

"Very bad—much snow," he said, tentatively, and looked at Annesley.

The boy sat stiffly on his horse, pale to the lips.

"We go on," he said, determinedly, and touched his horse, whistling to Kootenai at the same time. It was, indeed, too late to go back.

"Monturier—he half-breed—he live down this way," panted the Sword at Annesley's ear, as they raced onward.

"Maybe"—the rest of the sentence was lost in the whirling snow.

"Which way?" called back Annesley.

"We goin' right," the Indian shouted, and they pounded on. But he was evidently not sure, for after an hour's hard riding he slackened speed, calling to Annesley to stop, too. He sat on his pony, looking around and making vain efforts to get his bearings from the look of the country about him, but it was impossible. The fiercely falling snow shut down about them, an impenetrable curtain. Then, slipping off his pinto, the Sword ex-

amined the trails that crossed and recrossed the prairie. He could faintly distinguish them by the slight indentations they made in the snow. But they told him nothing, and at length it was plain that he was completely bewildered.

While they waited in the gathering darkness, Annesley called softly to the mastiff who had so bravely followed them, and who was walking about nosing the trails and stopping every few seconds to peer through the blinding snow. He leaned down from his saddle, and laid a hand on the faithful creature's head.

"I'm sorry I got you into this, old fellow! There! put your forefeet up on the saddle and look me straight in the face. I apologize, and I would give anything if I thought I could get you away safe and sound. But I'm afraid not, Kootenai. It's all my fault—it always has been my fault. Ever since I could remember, old chap, I've been in trouble, and always through my own mad recklessness. I do things I should not do, and then some way I can't face the consequences, and so I try to get out of them, and I get out of them in

the wrong way, and—there I am! What can I expect? I see now—I've known it ever since we started—that I have tried to get out of this trouble the wrong way. There's only one redeeming feature about this, Kootenai, and that is that I am pretty certain it will be the last. I think we have come to the edge of the world, sure enough, old fellow. You remember we were talking about it a year or so ago—no?—was it only yesterday morning? Well, it seems like a century"——

The Indian had got on his pony again and was calling to Annesley.

"*Notokoakit*—come on—this road good road to Monturier." But there was no conviction in his voice, and, as they turned their ponies down the trail he indicated, they galloped straight away from their only chance of shelter and into the heart of the storm.

III

It was five days later when Sergeant Steele and two men from the post came upon them. The storm had passed, the Chinook had again sprung up—it blows often in the spring of the year—and,

sweeping over the Alberta prairie, had once more melted the snow as if by magic. The land was again one sodden stretch of brown, with here and there tiny patches of green showing; only on the shaded banks of the turbulent mountain streams and in the hollows of the low foothills near Airdrie drifts of snow still lingered.

It was among these low-lying hills, where the snow still clung to their northern slopes, that the sergeant and his party found them. The Sword was lying face downward on the ground, where he had evidently fallen and died from cold and exhaustion. A hundred yards farther on they came upon Annesley. He was seated upon the slope of a hillock, mumbling softly to himself and pulling up and eating handfuls of tender young grass just showing above the mould. The green froth upon his lips was horrible. Close beside him, propped up on his haunches and with tender, mournful eyes fixed on the boy, sat the gaunt shadow of Kootenai's former self.

The trembling sergeant waved his men back, and, slipping from his horse, walked softly toward

the pair. The dog gave a faint, low growl, but Annesley rested a hand upon his muzzle.

"It is my father, Kootenai," he said. He made as if to rise, but the effort was far beyond him and he sank back on the side of the hillock.

"I am glad you have come, sir," he said, quietly, looking up at the sergeant standing above him. "There has not been a day since I left home that I have not wanted to explain and—to say—I was —sorry. I was going to my mother—but something has happened—" The faint voice ceased, and the reasonless eyes looked vaguely, questioningly, around over the wide prairie, and then closed.

The sergeant knelt down quickly and forced a few drops of whiskey between Annesley's shut teeth. In a minute the boy opened his eyes.

"Will you tell her, father—that I was coming to her as quickly as I could, but the snow—the horses"—he stopped again.

"Yes, yes," said the sergeant. "The horses—where are they?"

Annesley looked up at the sergeant with vacant eyes.

"We shot them," he said, indifferently. "It was in the night of the storm, and we galloped straight over the edge of the world, and we fell and fell for hours, and they broke their legs and we had to shoot them. The Sword says it was only a cut-bank, but he didn't know—he was quite crazy, I think. *I* know and Kootenai knew, too. For us it was the edge of the world——"

The voice ceased again and the staring eyes shut. The sergeant stood looking down at the boy, with a great lump in his throat. He had been constantly with Annesley for two weeks before the latter had been sent off to the North Saskatchewan, and he had liked him, and wondered a little about his story, for he saw that he was different. He stood looking down so long that his men gradually came forward and drew close to the prostrate figure. One of them saluted.

"Shall we tie his hands, sir?" he asked.

The sergeant looked up.

"Stand back!" he commanded, sharply. And then he added under his breath, softly and wonderingly, "Don't you see that he is dead?"

VII

THE BUNGALOW RANCHE

"IT'S an infernal nuisance!" said Rutland, plaintively, knocking the ash off his cigar and looking at the inspector for sympathy.

Captain Eviston leaned comfortably back in his big chair.

"Of course, my dear fellow, but what's to be done about it, so long as they are not actually committing any wrong or doing any harm?" It was very hot, and the inspector spoke lazily through a cloud of tobacco smoke.

"Not doing any harm!" Rutland shook himself impatiently out of his chair and began to tramp excitedly up and down the inspector's den. "Don't you think it's sufficiently harmful to have the dirty beggars forever lounging around the ranche, forever turning up in the most unexpected and irritating fashion, forever presenting their evil-

smelling clothes and persons at my clean kitchen door? As for Wong, I believe the heathen gives 'em food by the bushel to get 'em to come and play poker with him. He's a born gambler and would bet the cue off his head against an Indian's scalp-lock if you gave him a chance. And how am I to know how many steers and lambs they get away with? How am I to know how many saplings they cut down for their tepee poles? I flatter myself that no man in the Northwest looks after his ranche more closely than I do, but it's impossible to be everywhere at once. Well, if you won't help me with the law, Eviston, I'll have to find some other way of ridding myself of the pack of dirty beggars. I won't have them loafing around the Bungalow any more!"

The heat outside was fierce and sifted through the almost closed shutters and lowered screens at the window of the inspector's den. Rutland's face was purple, and big drops of perspiration stood on his forehead as he moved rapidly around the little room. Captain Eviston looked at him meditatively and with some amusement.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," he said, at length. "It's hot enough, heaven knows, without exciting yourself unnecessarily. Sit down and let's talk this over."

But Rutland was too wrought up for pacific measures, and continued to pace up and down and puff nervously at his cigar.

He was a big man, whose clean-cut English face, in spite of present excitement, looked humorous, and whose clear blue eyes twinkled jovially. As he stamped around the little room it was evident that he was lame in the left leg. The summer before, while on his vacation in England, Rutland had been the victim of an accident under which most men would have sunk, but the buoyancy of his temperament and his magnificent health had saved him, and he had returned with apparently nothing worse the matter with him than a slight lameness caused, as he told his friends, by a severe attack of sciatica. For the subject of his lameness was a sore one with Rutland, and he had spoken to no one of the accident save to Captain Eviston. His greatest consolation was that the halt in his

walk was scarcely apparent, and that he could still hunt and do hard riding and "roping" as before.

What was much more noticeable about Rutland than his lameness was his exquisite neatness. In a land where the weather and society permit of extravagant vagaries of dress, Rutland's conventional attire attracted much attention. This orderliness was not wholly personal, however, but extended even unto the management of his ranche and shack. What a yacht or fast horse is to some men, Rutland's shack was to him. The Bungalow was his hobby, and he was rapidly becoming as fussy and particular about it as an old maid. His sensibilities would have been inexpressibly hurt to see any part of it out of repair or in disorder, and its reputation for unapproachable cleanliness and a sort of exclusive superiority had become legendary. Perhaps the crowning luxury of Rutland's establishment was his Chinese cook, Wong. Good cooking among ranchers is about as rare as Kohinoor diamonds, and Rutland's celestial *cordon bleu* was known and appreciated far and wide.

Some people were of the opinion that the Bun-

galow was too far from everything, but Rutland liked the solitude, especially as it afforded such unparalleled grazing land for his flocks and herds. Rutland had his own ideas and methods about the breeding of cattle, and he could and would talk on the subject for hours at a time. Most people disagreed with him, but the fact remained that his cattle were the finest to be seen in southern Alberta. Next to the shack they were Rutland's greatest pride and delight. There were delightful stories, widely circulated among the cowboys and half-breeds, that Rutland had his sheep washed and combed once a week and counted his steers every evening.

It was the recollection of some of these apocryphal tales that caused the amused smile to overspread Captain Eviston's face, as he leaned back and looked at Rutland tramping viciously about the room. He could just imagine the state of indignation that was consuming the owner of the Bungalow Ranche at the thought of its desecration by the Indian loafers who insisted on hanging around the place.

"The scoundrels actually come and camp on me!" Rutland was speaking again, plaintively. "Last week fifteen lodges settled down on the Elbow Creek. I'd have sent the whole lot packing if there hadn't been a sick squaw with them!" He dropped limply into his chair.

An orderly knocked at the door, with glasses and a pitcher of iced lemonade, which Mrs. Eviston had thoughtfully sent in.

"It certainly must be an infernal nuisance, as you say, Rutland, to have the dirty beggars loafing around the immaculate Bungalow Ranche," said Eviston, pouring out his guest a glass of the lemonade. "But what under heaven can I do about it, either in my military or civil capacity? The Indians around here have been extremely, I might say almost suspiciously, good for a long while, and we can't afford to be too hard on them. And unless you have some specific complaint to make, as a justice of the peace I don't see how I am to proceed against them."

Rutland sipped his lemonade discontentedly.

"You're a most disappointing chap, Eviston,"

he said. "I thought surely you could help me. See here, why can't you indict them for trespassing?"

"My dear fellow, this isn't a little corner of England! After all, the beggars can't be expected to know just where the sixty thousand acres of the Bungalow Ranche begin and end, and in their visits to and from neighboring reservations they have to camp somewhere. Why, there are twenty lodges of Kootenais camping down here, a quarter of a mile from us, and it would never occur to me to tell them to move on. After all, they have some primeval rights, you know. It really won't do for us to interfere with their peaceful movements."

"Well, they may be peaceful to them, but, by Jove, they bring no peace to me! Besides, camping on my place is not what I most greatly object to. It's their infernal, exasperating way of hanging around the shack. I can't come near it but that I see half a dozen of their bucking pintos tied to the fences or just disappearing behind the stables. I can't be away a day but, on coming back in the evening, I encounter any number of Piegans or Crows lounging around the enclosure. I find them

sitting on the grass smoking when I go to open the windows in the morning. I believe they actually sleep on the veranda—my veranda—at night! I've threatened and scolded and sworn at 'em, and I've promised 'em I'd report to you and have 'em locked up. But nothing has the slightest effect. There seems to be some confounded fascination about the place for the beggars."

Captain Eviston blew a great double ring of tobacco smoke with a last puff at his cigar. He put the stub in the ash-tray and looked at his friend meditatively and silently.

"So you've threatened and scolded and sworn at them," he said, at length. "Why don't you try frightening them as a last resort? Scare 'em off the place, since that is all that's left to be tried. It ought to be easy—heaven knows they're as easily frightened as children; and as for you, Rutland, I've never yet seen you when you weren't ready for a practical joke. Turn your talents to use, my dear fellow, and *joke* the whole lot of Piegans, Nez Percés, and Crows off the never-sufficiently-to-be-taken-care-of Bungalow Ranche!"

Rutland put his empty glass down on the table and looked narrowly at Eviston.

"I think you must be joking yourself," he said, a little stiffly, and then, suddenly, he burst out laughing.

"By Jove, Eviston, that isn't a bad suggestion —if it can only be done. But I haven't the shadow of a—" He was staring absently up at the ceiling. All at once he began laughing again. "Don't speak to me!" he said, getting up and shaking himself. "I have an idea, and I'm going home to think it out. I'll let you know about it if it comes to anything."

He was still laughing when he passed through the little sitting-room to the veranda, where he found Mrs. Eviston sewing in the cool air which was beginning to be felt after the heat of the early afternoon.

"You had much better stay and have tea with us," urged the captain's wife.

"Thanks, awfully, Mrs. Eviston, but I can't. It's quite impossible, as I have to get back to the ranche."

Mrs. Eviston could still hear him laughing as he got on his horse and rode off.

"Arthur," she called to her husband, "what's Jimmie Rutland laughing about?"

"Don't know," replied the captain, getting up and coming to the screened veranda door. "Wish I did."

It was eight days afterward, in the early morning, when one of Rutland's cowboys galloped over the ten miles of prairie lying between the Bungalow and the detachment, and presented himself at the inspector's quarters with a hastily pencilled note for Captain Eviston.

"The idea has materialized! Be at the Bungalow at four this afternoon if you want to see some fun and yours truly avenged. This is strictly *entre nous*. Can you lend me your interpreter for the afternoon? If so, bring him, and oblige,

"Yours, J. R."

Captain Eviston scribbled on a piece of paper: "All right. I'll be with you!" and handed it to the man.

It was just four when the inspector drew up beside the long, wide veranda which gave the Bungalow an added air of distinction and had incidentally suggested the name. As he jumped out of the cart and threw the reins to the interpreter, whom he had brought with him, Rutland came quickly out of the shack. There was about him an air of excitement and the pleased expression of the man who knows the joke.

"Come in here," he said, dragging Eviston into the house, "and have a drink while I tell you all about it." He laughed delightedly as he moved the Scotch and soda over to his guest.

"It's this way. I'd thought about the whole confounded thing until I was pretty nearly crazy. Your suggestion the other day set me to thinking on a different tack, and, by Jove, I've hammered out a little scheme which I think will scare the beggars out of their boots—moccasins, I mean—and set them packing in a hurry."

"Nothing actionable, I hope," murmured Eviston. "I'd hate to have you up before me——"

"No—no; nothing of the kind," gurgled Rut-

land, who was bubbling over with satisfaction. "In the first place, we are to have a first-class tea-dance here shortly." He pulled out his watch. "By Jove, it's almost time for them to be here. You see I've invited a lot of the Lord High Muckamucks among the Indians, the medicine-men and chiefs and young braves, to meet me here this afternoon for a tea-dance. There's ten gallons of the strongest tea to be bought at the H. B. Company's store boiling on the stove under Wong's eye at this minute. By the way, I've promised to cut his cue off if I see him so much as speak to an Indian after to-day. And there's tobacco by the pound waiting for 'em, so I think on the whole they'll enjoy themselves. And when they get a little mellowed by the tea and tobacco *I* will take a hand in the proceedings. I—" he leaned over and spoke a few words to Eviston in a low tone.

"By Jove!" said the inspector, and there was laughter and wondering admiration in his choked voice. "It's too good to be true! I wouldn't miss it—" A confused murmur of voices and the tramp of ponies and dull thudding of a tomtom became

suddenly audible to the two men. Rutland jumped up and went to the window.

"They're coming, Eviston," he said, excitedly. "Now for it!" He went out on the veranda and the captain followed, still shaking with suppressed laughter.

Up the carefully made road which wound through the Bungalow's fifty-acre front enclosure there pressed a variegated highly colored procession of bedecked Indians on their equally gayly decorated ponies. Clouds of dust accompanied them, out of which now and then a fractious pinto would emerge in an effort to gallop across the cool grass, only to be pulled into the ranks again by his rider, conscious that the Bungalow's owner was looking at him from afar. As the men cantered along they chattered like monkeys in a cocoanut tree, almost drowning the sound of the tomtom borne proudly in front by a young Nez Percé. On each side of the Nez Percé were ranged two musicians with strange instruments upon which, later on, they made horrible and deafening noises. Behind them came the crowd of medicine-men, chiefs, and young bucks.

Rutland saw the Bungalow's sacred precincts invaded by the red man for the first time with any feeling approaching that of pleasure.

"I think I've invited enough to spread the news of this afternoon's entertainment far and wide, don't you, Eviston?" he inquired, eagerly. "And look what a choice lot. There's Medicine Pipestem, the blood-conjurer. If I can only get that hoary sinner frightened! And there's Wild Elk, the Piegan's noted medicine-man, and half a dozen others. My! but those Crow braves are gorgeously arrayed. Except for their complexions they would resemble the lily of the field, for certainly they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet Solomon—and so on. I say, I think my party will be a great success! What are the beggars doing now?"

As the head of the procession got within a few yards of the shack the leaders suddenly struck the broncos with their cuerts and the whole band of Indians circled madly past, shouting and saluting the two white men on the veranda. As suddenly they reined their ponies in, and leaping from them tied them to the fences and walked in groups to the

house. Rutland welcomed them gravely and they seated themselves in a large semicircle upon the grass before the shack.

A tea-dance is to Indian social affairs pretty much what an afternoon reception is to our society functions—an extremely mild form of pleasure, cheered by the cup that does not inebriate. The Indians have the advantage over us in that they are allowed smoking and dancing as extra amusements, but about the same amount of laughing and loud talking goes on as at an afternoon reception on Fifth Avenue. It was some time before they had settled down comfortably and ceased their chatter sufficiently to allow Rutland to make his speech to them, which he did with the aid of the interpreter. Holliday, the interpreter, a tall, loose-jointed youth, half Scotch, half Indian, was the delight of the inspector's heart.

"Holliday'll tell them anything you say—straight," he had whispered to Rutland, and Rutland had confided freely in him. But it was a delicate matter to suggest to the Indians just what Rutland wished to suggest and no more or less.

"I say, Holliday, just tell the beggars that I'm awfully glad to see the whole boiling of them here this afternoon," hazarded Rutland, diffidently. "Tell 'em I'm particularly glad to see 'em to-day because I've had a—er—a—warning from the Gitchi Manitou that I won't see them ever again at the Bungalow." Rutland looked inexpressibly grieved as he repeated that part of his speech to Holliday. "I say, don't make any mistake about that—be sure and tell 'em I've had a warning from the Great Spirit."

Holliday nodded with a rather puzzled expression on his good-natured face and translated Rutland's sentiments into understandable Blackfoot. A subdued murmur ran through the line of Indians crouched upon the ground, and the medicine-men put their heads together and talked in excited undertones. The young bucks eyed Rutland with a new awe and moved closer together over the short grass. Rutland smiled inwardly with a great satisfaction at the impression his words had produced.

"And tell 'em, Holliday," he went on, embol-

dened by the success of his speech so far, "tell 'em that I regret that the Great Spirit has so ordered that the Bungalow should see no more of the fine Piegans and Crows and Nez Percés whom I see here before me for the last time." Rutland's English left much to be desired, but the oratorical effect was grand. "Tell 'em I salute them all, especially the medicine-men, who are my brothers, and that now we will have some refreshments."

The concluding words of Rutland's speech, though on a lower plane of sentiment than the beginning, were warmly welcomed, and the tea and tobacco passed around by Wong and Holliday disappeared with astonishing rapidity. Each Indian had a large tin cup from which he drank his *sixikimmi* with unceasing activity and relish, and on apparently the same principle that an engine takes in water, for no sooner was a sufficient supply consumed than it was immediately converted into energy and the Indians would begin to dance to the fierce accompaniment of the tomtom and shrll whistles, and when the steam generated was all used up, the empty boilers were again and again

refilled and the process of steam-making went on unabatingly and gayly.

For an hour and a half did Rutland and Captain Eviston sit upon the veranda of the Bungalow and watch the noble red man's unflagging zest in the consumption of tea and the smoking of tobacco, varied by sudden gusts of sound from the tomtom and the beat of moccasined feet in the dance. The dancing was decorous, almost perfunctory, however, and reminded one again of the hollow pleasures of an afternoon reception. Sometimes it consisted of no more than a stately march around the enclosure. Occasionally one of the younger braves, excited by the dizzy consequences of strong tea into which chewing-tobacco had been dipped, would fling himself to his feet and begin a fantastic movement, but the excitement soon passed and he would seat himself and attack his cup of *sixikimmi* with renewed vigor. Some of the old chiefs were nodding, half asleep, in a trance of pleasure over the unlimited supply of good drink and tobacco.

The afternoon was beginning to wane. The sun

had set in his accustomed midsummer splendor behind the Rockies, and, although it was still quite light, the first faint shadows of the coming twilight were beginning to fall over the prairie.

Suddenly Rutland leaned over toward his friend.

"I can't stand any more of this, Eviston," he said. "I think it's about time I played my hand. Come on!" The two men descended the veranda steps and seated themselves just below them on the grass and in full view of the semicircle of Indians, who were surprised into silence by Rutland's manœuvre.

"Remember, you are to talk unconcernedly to me, Eviston, or I'll never get through this thing without laughing." He pulled from his hip-pocket a keen two-edged knife with a heavy handle, known as the "half-breed knife." It looks very much like the bowie-knife and is about as deadly. Rutland leaned back comfortably against the steps of the veranda, stretching his legs out on the grass in front of him, and conscious that the Indians were watching his every movement with intense curiosity and interest. Eviston began talk-

ing to him. It was pure nonsense what he was saying, but that was no matter—the effect was good.

As Eviston talked, Rutland passed the blade through his fingers feeling the keen edges. Suddenly and unconcernedly he plunged the knife up to the hilt into his left leg. When he drew it out carelessly not a drop of blood fell from the wound. He plunged it again and so skilfully that it buried itself in his quivering limb just above the knee-cap.

A perfect tumult arose among the Indians, the young bucks jumping to their feet with muffled yells of terror and the medicine-men muttering together and clutching their medicine-bags. It was, indeed, evident that he was under the protection of the Gitchi Manitou—or was it the Great Evil Spirit, they asked each other with chattering teeth? That such things should be done and without drawing a drop of blood! Who could withstand such medicine as this? It were better to be dead than to see such things. Oh! that they had not come to the Bungalow Ranche!

But Rutland paid no attention to this excite-

ment. Again and again, as he talked interestedly with the inwardly convulsed inspector, did he plunge the sharp, two-edged blade into his long-suffering left leg. Now it was buried to the hilt in the calf, now it had cut the leather of his boot and transfixed the instep, now it stuck hideously into the bended knee. The Indians sat in huddled, frightened heaps, the perspiration standing out on their foreheads and their gaze fixed, as if hypnotized, on the white sorcerer. Stifled groans of terror and hoarse, creaking exclamations of fright were heard. Old and young braves were shaking as if with a chill. A Crow medicine-man sprang into the air as if electrified, his robe dropping from his quaking shoulders.

The Indian of the tomtom sat rigid with fear, the sticks falling from his nerveless fingers. Rutland looked at him out of the corner of his eye and recognized in him a particularly objectionable young Nez Percé, whom he confidently believed had often slept on the immaculate veranda of the Bungalow. Drawing the knife out of his knee, he felt the edge carefully and then, with a blow

which would have disconnected any ordinary foot from its leg, he brought it down upon his ankle. The man who invented this must have known all about his business for it gave way only partially and the foot still dangled in a sickening, dreadful way from the half-severed limb. The tomtom rattled to the ground and rolled aimlessly over the grass until it hit a half-comatose chief, who yelled with terror at the unexpected touch.

And then quickly and silently, one by one, did those Indians melt away. In the fast-falling twilight did the fringe of terror-stricken humanity disappear. Whole segments of the semicircle dropped off mysteriously in the gathering darkness and there was much plunging of broncos and swish of whirling quirts. The rout became infectious and precipitate, and the Piegans and Crows and Nez Percés, who had arrived so gayly and vociferously in the brilliant afternoon, now fled noiselessly and fearfully back through the night.

Down the Bungalow's well-kept avenue they streamed in full retreat while Rutland and the captain lay upon the grass, littered with abandoned

tin cups and musical instruments, and shouted with laughter until the coyotes in the far foothills woke up and howled back to know what was the matter.

When they could laugh no more, Rutland rolled over to the step, and, propping himself against it, tenderly turned up the remains of his cut and tattered trouser-leg, and as he looked he laughed afresh, for from midway the thigh down Rutland's wonderful left leg consisted of the latest skilful medico-mechanical contrivance in cork and marvellous joints, now slashed and gouged and wrenched beyond repair.

"It cost me seventy-five dollars," he gasped when he could speak. "But I've another, Eviston. I bought two in case of accident. It's a wreck—there's no doubt of that, and it cost seventy-five dollars, but Lord! this afternoon's entertainment was cheap at that, and the Bungalow's rid of those infernal—" and he began laughing again.

VIII

RED MAGIC

SIR ROBERT leaned over toward his sister. "It's very interesting, isn't it, Kathleen?" he inquired.

Miss Campbell put her hand up to her mouth and stifled a little yawn.

"Well, we saw it much better done in Calcutta, you know. I am beginning to think the fakir is like the gentleman—the same all the world over." And then she looked rather contritely to where her host was sitting. He had taken so much trouble to amuse them that it seemed hardly fair to be anything but enthusiastic. Sargent caught the look.

"What were you saying, Miss Campbell?" he asked.

"We were saying that we had seen much the same thing done in Calcutta," she answered, with a fine economy of truth.

"Oh, yes. That ladder-climbing trick is very

old, I believe, and very easily explained by those who understand how it is done. It rather passes my dull comprehension, however. Old Medicine Pipestem may not be as expert as the jugglers you have seen in the Orient, but he is quite mysterious enough to puzzle me."

Sir Robert turned his handsome, clever face to Sargent.

"I am afraid both you and Kathleen miss the vitally interesting thing about this exhibition," he said, seriously. "Whether Ram Choga is more proficient in his art—for I believe that is the best term for it—than the Indian, Medicine Pipestem, is of no moment. The real point of interest is that the art of the East Indian fakir and the art of the American aborigine should so startlingly resemble each other. Why, it opens up anew the whole subject of the origin of the peoples of North America! I have ever taken issue with those ethnologists who hold that the American Indian is a descendant of the lost ten tribes, and have always inclined toward the theory, so ably advanced by Thomas Jefferson and others, that they derive their origin from the

Mongols and Malays. Although my information on the subject is far from being extensive, my convictions are all with the eastern Asiatic theory, and everything I have seen here to-night tends to confirm them; and I am persuaded that if at one time there was a more highly civilized race upon this wonderful continent, it was exterminated by some great Mongolian invasion similar to that which under Genghis Khan swept over China, or to that which devastated the Roman Empire. Not alone do striking likenesses in language prevail, such, for example, as the Dakotas' word for moon, *oweeh*, and the Tartar word for the same, *oee* or *aee*, or, a still more perfect case, the Cherokees' word for dog, *keera*, and the Tschischouski, *koera*, but the manners and customs——"

"Bob," Miss Campbell's voice came in a pleading whisper, "spare us! What have we done to merit this? Besides," she added, "I am sure that won't be interesting in your book. Don't forget not to put it in."

Sir Robert smiled slightly, much to Sargent's relief.

"Kathleen persists in taking it for granted that I am going to write a book on 'The British Empire in America.' I think that is what she calls it. It is needless to assure you, Sargent, that, considering the vastness of the subject, and the short time in which I have to study it, and—and for other reasons, I shall do no such thing."

Miss Campbell laughed a little mocking laugh, and the sound of her voice was strange in the Indian tepee.

"Don't believe him, Mr. Sargent!" she urged. "Nothing short of a total inability to get hold of pen and paper could keep him from writing a book about you. And even in that case, I believe he would take to scribbling his notes on his dress-shirts, or get me to tattoo them on his back like the man in that horrid story of Rider Haggard's. There, dear, don't get cross!" She slipped her arm within her brother's.

Sir Robert looked down at her. "Hands off!" he said, with mock severity. "Great heavens! haven't you any reverence in your frivolous composition? If you don't respect me, your brother, haven't you

any compunctions about making light of a newly created knight, of an M.P., an F.R.G.S., a——"

"Don't, Bob!" she pleaded again. "Do hush talking, and get Mr. Sargent to tell us what that Indian is saying."

A young, gaudily-dressed buck was flashing backward and forward between the little knot of white people and the larger assembly of Indians on the other side of the tepee. He was gesticulating and speaking excitedly, with much the air of the professional showman who feels that his star attraction is not wholly appreciated, and who insists on proclaiming the star's merits. The light from the fire, blazing up every now and then, showed his face with its working muscles and startling decoration. Between the eyes, on the forehead, was painted in vivid green the head of a serpent, the body of which trailed backward to the hair, reappearing at the nape of the neck, and writhed its length down the spinal column, finishing up with a flourish and final coil upon the Indian's heaving chest, which lay bared where the red flannel shirt fell away. It was extremely unpleasant as a work

of art, and it gave the man his name. Behind him the figure of Medicine Pipestem, his father, the most noted medicine-man in the Blood nation, crouched upon the floor of the tepee, swathed in his medicine-robes.

Sargent looked at the half-breed interpreter.

"What is Painted Snake saying?" he demanded.

The face the boy turned to Sargent wore a curious expression of blended amusement and fear.

"He says, sir, that Medicine Pipestem makes much big medicine, and that Painted Snake will become great medicine-man, too, but that *napiake* [white woman] and the other pale faces do not believe because evil spirits have hold of them. He says Medicine Pipestem will show still further wonders, and prove that the Gitchi Manitou has sent him a message."

"Well, tell the beggar to hurry up, then," said Sargent, testily. He was afraid Miss Campbell was getting bored, and the mere notion was alarming. Miss Campbell's feelings had suddenly become of vital importance to Sargent.

As he looked at her it seemed most amazing that

he had known her only a week. Sir Robert and he had been friends since their Cambridge days, when the former had taken every scholarship and prize within hailing distance, and he himself had just managed to scrape joyously through his university career. He suddenly remembered with keen disgust the several invitations down to Oak Court, which he had somehow neglected to accept. Why, he might have known this girl years ago! And then, shortly after the end of university days, he had been stricken with that fever for excitement and tramping and a perfectly unconventional life which is almost sure to attack every normal Englishman at least once in his lifetime, and usually in his youth, and he had packed up his slender belongings, and left well-ordered little England for Her Majesty's vast and picturesque dominion in America.

Alberta had suited him very well indeed, and from time to time, even into that out-of-the-world locality, reports of his friend's career, of his wonderful popularity and brilliant achievements, had made their way. Apparently Sir Robert had trav-

elled over and studied his queen's colonial possessions in the most unlikely places, and had written books thereon which had attracted the favorable notice of a great many gentlemen behind the throne. Some of them were simply judicious and flattering pæans of praise of the British government; some contained a youthful, courageous, and sane amount of blame for obvious mismanagement and oppression; and some of them, in the light of political events of the next few years, read like prophecies.

Great Britain has a special liking for her sons who go forth, take notice of what she has done, and give it to the world in brilliantly written books. She bestows titles and favors upon them. Before he was thirty Campbell had been knighted, made an under-secretary, and was on the road to dazzling promotion. His friends feared the worst. There was nothing he was not likely to attempt, and he was always successful. If he had not been such an unaffected, thoroughly popular personage his triumphs would have been insufferable.

When he left England for a trip around the

world everyone predicted that something would come of it. Sir Robert himself, however, had no very definite intention of getting anything but pleasure out of the journey. He had taken his sister, and he expected to derive a great deal of enjoyment, not only from seeing much that was new, but from going over with her ground that was already familiar and interesting to himself. She had proved a most congenial travelling companion, and, as a rule, grateful for the amazing amount of statistics and varied information which Sir Robert imparted.

They had travelled in a leisurely fashion across eastern Europe, through India and Japan, and the Pacific steamer had brought them to Vancouver, when Sir Robert had suddenly remembered Sargent. Old memories and affections began to stir, and he sent a letter post-haste to tell Sargent that, though the Rockies and prairies divided them, he would see his face again or know the reason why. Sargent read the letter in the little post-office at Spitze, and felt more flabbergasted than he had ever felt before in his life. He could not accustom

himself to the thought that Campbell—Sir Robert wrote "we," and Sargent thought he meant himself and a servant—was so near. In a sort of dream he got himself on his pony and headed for his ranche. He had only one thought—he must prepare for Campbell's arrival.

That event took place late one afternoon, a fortnight after the advent of Sir Robert's letter. It is needless to describe Sargent's feelings when the coach from Fort Macleod drew up before his shack, and Sir Robert clambered down, followed by an exceedingly pretty girl, who bore so striking a likeness to him as to be unmistakably his sister. Sargent never remembered how he comported himself on that occasion. But after a few moments of dazzled contemplation of the situation and Miss Campbell, it occurred to him that, after all, things might be much worse. By nightfall he had taken a most cheerful view of the crisis, and was planning a series of expeditions for her amusement and edification.

He had found her charmingly companionable and interested in everything. This visit to the

Blood Indians, and the exhibition later by the greatest medicine-man among them, Sargent had counted upon as being perhaps the most entertaining thing he had to show her, and now she seemed actually bored by it. He looked over to where she sat, between her brother and the wife of the agent of the reservation, whom they had brought with them, and began to anathematize old Medicine Pipestem in his heart for being such a brute of a conjurer.

But Sargent's fears were simply born of an over-anxiety to please. Miss Campbell, so far from being bored, was intensely interested in everything going on. She had seen better juggling than the old Indian was master of, but there were many other things which were strange and wonderfully entertaining to her. From where she sat she could not only see the interior of the whole medicine-lodge, but could catch glimpses of the night outside, and little breaths of fresh, cool air scented with the wolf-willow, when a flap of the tent was lifted and dropped as braves and young bucks passed in and out. Strange northern stars hung low over the

land, and from far away came the wild cry of the coyote. Inside the lodge the fire, which flickered and leaped up and sank down, showed her on one side the tepee the little group of white people, her brother and Sargent and the Indian agent, Leroy, and his wife, and on the other the strained, awe-struck faces of twenty-five or thirty Indians, crouching on the ground, and watching with fascinated gaze the tricks of Medicine Pipestem and the wild, excited gestures of Painted Snake.

Over in one corner, where the fringe of darkness hung heaviest, sat a bent, withered, fabulously old-looking warrior who beat feebly upon a tomtom, and by his side a young boy blowing shrilly upon a "mystery whistle." Close about the fire was a circle of blanketed, befeathered chiefs, who had listened at first stonily to Painted Snake's boasting, but who were becoming restless and frightened as old Medicine Pipestem proceeded with his magic.

Painted Snake, who had gone about among them all day, had promised great things. His father was to show, that evening, the greatest medicine ever seen among the Blood or any other nation,

and the white man was to tremble and turn weak before it. The Indians thought they would like that—they had never seen the white man afraid—and so they had flocked to the medicine-lodge. If Medicine Pipestem could make the white man weak he would be, indeed, a great medicine-chief, and Painted Snake, who had heralded this wonder, would share the glory. Much could be done for ten dollars and unlimited *sixikimmi.*

Behind this circle of chiefs swayed and crouched and panted a crowd of restless young bucks, more credulous and more excited than their elders. Their wild gestures and white, awed faces showed weird in the uncertain light. They formed, in Miss Campbell's opinion, the most interesting element of the unique tableau. Old Medicine Pipestem was sitting silent and meditative before the fire, smoking a long pipe. Except for the excited words of Painted Snake, which every now and then broke the stillness, and the low murmur of talk and restless movement of the young warriors, the tepee was absolutely quiet.

Suddenly the door of the tent was lifted, and a

young squaw entered, bearing in her hand a small earthen pan filled with dark, freshly-turned earth. She gave it to Medicine Pipestem, who gravely laid aside his pipe, and began to stir the mould with his hands. Painted Snake went over to him, and, kneeling beside the old man, whispered a few words to him. After a second's hesitation Medicine Pipestem drew forth from his shaggy medicine-robe a small bag. Painted Snake emptied the contents into the palm of his hand, and advanced toward the group of white people. He stopped pointedly before Miss Campbell, and stretched out his hand. In its hollow lay three small dark-brown seeds. Then he stepped quickly back, and, returning the seeds to Medicine Pipestem, began to strut magnificently up and down. The old man, paying no heed to his son, dropped the seeds carefully, one by one, upon the earth which the squaw had brought, and covered each gently with more earth, scooping it up from the sides of the pan. Then he carefully placed the dish before him, in the cleared space between the fire and the spectators, and rose.

After an instant's contemplation of the scene be-

fore him, he slowly began to take off, one by one, his trappings of medicine man—the thick robe of bearskin and the heavy head-dress and the many ornaments—until he stood there quite nude, save for the shaps and the great medicine-bag which hung around his neck. It was a visionary but strong face that the old man turned to the fire, which now blazed and crackled fiercely.

Suddenly the sorcerer opened the medicine-bag which hung from his neck, and putting in his hand drew from it a folded piece of cloth of a dirty grayish hue. As it fell, soft and voluminous, to the ground, it completely enveloped Medicine Pipestem, who wrapped it, fold after fold, about him; then, with a scornful glance about the assembly, he stepped quickly, though with a shuffling gait, for the cloth was swathed even about his feet, into the blazing fire.

A sort of terrified groan went up from the young braves, and there was a sharp indrawing of painful breath. The drum in the corner thudded hideously now, and the boy with the whistle outdid himself in frenzied efforts. The chiefs

gathered about the fire broke into a low, mournful chant, and their awe-struck faces showed ashen in the firelight. Around them Painted Snake threaded his triumphant way, circling in and out between the firelight and young bucks, and as he pranced, with high-lifted foot and bended knee, he chanted the praises of Medicine Pipestem, Man-Returning-with-the-Crane-Warwhoop.

Sargent motioned again to the interpreter.

"Tell us what that young idiot is saying, Riel."

The half-breed's face had lost its amused expression. Fear and credulity showed plainly on it now, and he looked wholly Indian.

"He says that Medicine Pipestem is great medicine-man; that when he was young his mother dipped him in blood of white buffalo, and now he is strong and mighty; and that the god of thunder brought him this robe so that lightning might not harm him nor fire burn him. Painted Snake says that maybe white man will believe now."

Leroy, the Indian agent, touched Campbell respectfully on the arm.

"I've been hearing about that robe for five years now, Sir Robert—ever since I've been here —and I never saw it before, or guessed what it was. I doubt if a dozen other Indians besides these have ever seen it. The joke of it is, the old fellow's in dead earnest. I haven't a doubt but that he believes it just as sacred and magical, and all that, as he lets on. That's where Indians are so queer. They can give a Scotchman points in shrewdness about some things, and then they'll fall down on something easy like this. If you'd tell 'em it was asbestos they wouldn't be a bit wiser, but think it was some magic fandango or other, anyway."

Sir Robert looked thoughtful.

"Asbestos, of course! Probably the amiantus, which is found in large quantities in eastern Canada, in the Pyrenees, Ural Mountains, New South Wales and Siberia. It's the best of all asbestos and of course a piece of cloth woven of it could have easily found its way here. Very interesting."

Miss Campbell was listening to her brother.

"Oh, it's asbestos, is it? The old fraud! He quite frightened me at first. I really thought we had struck something supernatural at last. How disappointing!" She laughed gayly at Sargent, and then she looked a little wearily about her; for she had driven twenty miles to the medicine-lodge that day, and would have to drive ten more to get to the reservation, where they were to stay for the night, and she felt tired and a little sleepy.

And so when Painted Snake and the frightened chiefs and excited young braves lifted their fascinated gaze from Medicine Pipestem, who still stood calmly in the midst of the flames, only beating them back now and then from his unprotected head, they saw, instead of the fear in the white faces which Painted Snake had predicted, only amusement and indifference and quiet observation.

At the sight Painted Snake leaped forward as if he had been lashed with a cuert, and strode up and down more fiercely than ever. Little flecks of foam lay on his lips. He perceived that his

father's dishonor would redound upon himself, and that if his promises were not kept it would go hard with him in the nation.

Suddenly Medicine Pipestem stepped out from the flame, and throwing off the magic robe—which was quite white and clean now—stood before his astonished and awe-struck people. Great rivulets of perspiration were running off his steaming body, and his face was white and drawn. With a supreme effort he dragged himself around the fire, and then sank down, panting, upon the ground. He was an old man, and the heat and nervous excitement had told on him.

There was a low frightened murmur from the chiefs crouched upon the floor of the tepee, and the young bucks behind them were swaying from side to side in their excitement, with a rhythmic motion and gesticulation like the chorus in an opera.

Sargent was watching Miss Campbell.

"How do you like it?" he asked.

The young girl smiled politely, showing her white, even teeth, which gleamed in the firelight.

"Oh, very much," she said. "Of course it would have been more thrilling if Mr. Pipestem's robe had really been a magic affair instead of a piece of asbestos cloth; but one mustn't ask too much. And I don't quite like the vociferous, snaky young man. He has made my head ache." She smiled again at Sargent.

As she did so, Medicine Pipestem rose from his place near the fire, and picking up the earthen dish held it high above his head so that all could see it. A tiny green stem and leaf were nodding above the dark mould.

"Heugh!" cried a chief, whose head-dress of eagles' feathers swept to the ground as he sprang to his feet. The other warriors sat erect and rigid, gazing as if hypnotized at Medicine Pipestem, who towered above them. As they looked, a small bud, like a tip of flame, which had nestled close to the stem, began to unfold. The tiny crimson petals expanded slowly, as if against their will, and seemed to drop wearily and mechanically away from the little cluster of stamens in the centre. A shudder ran through the stricken line of young braves, and the

boy musician blew blasts upon his mystery whistle that quivered and died away to frightened echoes.

Miss Campbell was leaning forward, gazing at the exotic little flower that had sprouted and grown and blossomed before her eyes. It was very pretty, and she was so intent upon it as to be quite unaware of the stillness and tense emotion of the Indians.

"That's quite a pretty trick, Bob. Don't you remember, dear, how excited over it I was the first time I saw it done at Nagasaki?" Miss Campbell's voice was soft and clear, with a peculiarly good carrying power. In the quiet of the tepee every word could be heard as distinctly as a pistol shot. She leaned back and laughed gayly and contentedly at the recollection. "How on earth do you suppose these Indians got hold of any of those Japanese flowers?" She looked at the Indian agent for reply, but he was watching the quivering line of young bucks and the scowling face of Painted Snake. It was Sargent who answered.

"Oh, easy enough, if that's what it is. The Kootenais, who live over on the coast and do some traf-

ficking with the sailors of the Chinese and Japanese boats touching at Vancouver, are great friends of these Indians. They were visiting here on the reserve only last month. That's doubtless how he got his magic flowers. But you and Leroy are destroying all my illusions, Miss Campbell," he went on, plaintively. "I would have been in an awful and delightful funk by this time if you hadn't explained everything so cleverly." Miss Campbell laughed again. "Really, it's too—well, upon my word, if the beggar hasn't got cheek!"

Sargent stared indignantly at Painted Snake, who had stationed himself immediately in front of Miss Campbell, and was literally dancing with rage, and talking and waving his arms wildly. Behind, and towering above him, stood Medicine Pipestem, the earthen dish still in his hands, and a gloomy, evil look on his withered old face. It was the first time he had apparently taken any notice of the visitors, and his attentions were most unpleasant. Painted Snake continued his speech.

"That is the most talkative chap I ever set eyes on," remarked Sargent, meditatively and wearily.

"For heaven's sake, what's he jawing about now, Riel?"

The half-breed's face had turned an ashen hue, and he was twisting his fingers nervously in and out. There was a little quaking note of fear in his voice when he spoke.

"He says that Medicine Pipestem is great medicine-man, and the Manitou is angry that the white people don' fear him. He says the Great Spirit sen' him a message of the future, which he goin' to show, and if the *napiake* and the other white faces don' believe, that the god of thunder——"

"Oh, tell him to go to thunder himself," interrupted Sargent, easily. "And see here, Riel; tell the old chap that if he's got any special message about the future to hurry up and tell us what it is, for we've got to get back to the reservation tonight."

Riel turned to the Indians.

"All is well, O Great Father. The heart of the white man is fearful. He seeks to know what the Great Manitou has said, and prays that it may not be evil. He is much afraid, and will pay well."

Sir Robert and the Indian agent were deep in conversation.

"Then, as I understand it," Sir Robert was saying, "this remarkable Indian, Medicine Pipestem, Man-Returning-with-the-Crane-Warwhoop, combines in him the powers both of the *medawin* and the *jesukawin*, the sorcerer and the seer. Schoolcraft has ably commented upon the subject. As, of course, you know, he divides the art of the Indian medicine into three distinct professions, and this——"

"I say, Campbell," interrupted Sargent, "you want to cross your fingers and touch wood. The interpreter says we are going to have something perfectly hair-raising this time. And if anybody knows an easy and quick solution of the thing, I do hope he will keep quiet and let me enjoy one genuine thrill. Hello! what are they doing now?"

The chiefs had broken the circle about the fire, and were moving closer to one another on each side, leaving a clear space between them and the little cluster of white visitors. Medicine Pipestem was seated near the fire, in the centre of the cleared space, and beside him stood Painted Snake. At a

gesture from the former, the young man went to the entrance of the tepee, returning with an earthen pan of wet clay, which he placed before his father. Then he, too, seated himself in the close-pressed ranks of young bucks and waited.

The medicine-man seemed to be in no hurry. Slowly he took from the folds of his fur robe, which he had resumed, a long pipe, and, filling it with some mixture from his fire-pouch, sat silent, drawing great whiffs from it. Dense curls of smoke eddied up and fluttered away; wreaths of it rose and festooned themselves to the tepee poles. The air grew cloudy and heavy with a strange, sleepy odor that clung like mist to everything it touched. The old man with the tomtom sat bowed over, his eyes closed and his hands beating only the feeblest tattoo. Miss Campbell shivered slightly and looked at Sargent. He was staring fixedly at the fire, and had moved far away from her. Her brother, too, must have changed his place. He seemed unaccountably far off, and his face had an absent, queer expression. Then she looked back at Medicine Pipestem, and found his eyes, which glowed like the eyes of a

trapped wildcat, fixed upon her with a peculiar, penetrating gaze. His body seemed far away, but the eyes were near and powerful. She felt a lazy sort of indignation that he should dare look at her so, and wondered dully why her brother permitted it. After a little she ceased to think about it.

Medicine Pipestem laid aside his pipe, and picking up the dish of wet clay began to knead it slowly, still keeping his bright gaze on the young girl. He was fashioning little ponies of the dough. There were three of them, and his cunning fingers made them strangely like horses of flesh and blood. The riders were on them, too—little figures that sat stiff and straight and immovable. Miss Campbell looked again. How big they were growing, and one of the riders was a girl. She could tell that by the riding-skirt, and there was something about the figure that reminded her of herself. She was too far off—how strangely far off she seemed!—to see the face, but she felt sure it was she. And how big the ponies were getting all the time! She reasoned vaguely that there must have been much more clay than she had thought, and really the Indian was very skilful.

He was making trees now—trees that grew and spread out before her eyes in a much more marvellous way than that silly red flower had done. And there were mountains, too, and the river, with the big cotton-woods on its bank. Oh, how stupid she had been! She recognized it all now. It was the North Fork, of course—the North Fork of the Kootenai River. She remembered the spot exactly, and the look of the Rockies just there, and the swift way the river ran around the bend of the shore. She had often ridden there with Sargent. And of course that was Sargent with her. That was just the long, even canter of his pony—for the horses were going fast now—she might have known it long ago. What a glorious ride it was! They were going like the wind. She would have liked to pull up a little, though, the pace was beginning to tire her; but Sargent would not let her. Why, they must be running away from that Indian on the other pony! She could tell it was an Indian by his deerskin shaps and the head-dress of porcupine quills, although they were all so far away that she could not see him distinctly.

Her breath was coming in short, fierce gasps. But Sargent was pitiless, and when her pony flagged he struck it with his own cuert. But the Indian was gaining on them. Oh, it was horrible! Would he never stop racing toward them? Once she turned her head and caught the glint of light on his gunlock. And how swiftly the water ran! They were nearing it now, and she could see the rapid flow of the mountain river. She wanted to turn up toward the ford. But Sargent called to her, in a voice she had never heard from him, to swim her pony straight across. Above the swirling water the opposite bank rose and fell waveringly to her troubled sight, and flowed away from her, as unstable as the rushing stream itself. They were at the very shaking edge of the river now! She turned sick with fear at the thought of the fierce current. Suddenly Sargent's arm went around her, and his hand was on her pony's bridle, and as suddenly some ineffable sense of security took possession of her, and she rose dizzily in her saddle and laughed aloud, recklessly, as the horses rocked forward to the plunge.

* * * * *

Miss Campbell opened her eyes wearily. She was out under the stars, with the fresh wind blowing upon her and scattering the clouds of smoke that issued from the tepee, where the young braves were stamping out the fire. There was a confusion of sounds about her, and dim Indian forms surged around and melted away into the darkness, and there was a babel of tongues and the wild beating of the tomtom as it was borne afar. Mrs. Leroy and Sir Robert were speaking together in a low tone, and the young girl noticed that the Englishwoman was white to the lips. She felt that she must be pale herself—pale and dully tired and stupid. Sargent was standing a little way off, looking at her with strange, troubled eyes.

Leroy materialized out of the night.

"The traps are ready," he said; "perhaps we had better be starting for the reservation. It is very late."

II

Sargent was shaving himself by the aid of a mirror he had hung on the wall of his improvised shack, just opposite the window. Shaving, which

before Miss Campbell's advent had been a hebdomadal nuisance, had now become a daily duty. He was in something of a hurry, for he was going to take her riding, and there were the ponies yet to corral and saddle. This was the first time she had been willing to go with him since the visit to the Blood Indian reserve ten days before, and Sargent did not mean to waste any of the afternoon. Perhaps Sir Robert's absence had had something to do with her indisposition to go anywhere. He had gone off with Leroy and two Indian guides to explore the Kootenai Lake, and Mrs. Leroy had come down from the reservation to stay with Miss Campbell. The assistant agent, a young and inexperienced civil servant, was left, with his heart in his mouth, to take care of the Bloods.

Sargent stooped down to sharpen his razor. When he looked again in the mirror another face besides his own was reflected in it. He turned quickly to the window. Just outside of it, curled up tailor-wise on the dry prairie-grass, and smoking calmly, sat Pretty Feathers, the Piegan scout from the police detachment.

"What the devil do you mean, Pretty Feathers, by coming around like—" began Sargent, hotly.

Pretty Feathers smiled soothingly, without removing his pipe. It is almost impossible to disturb an Indian's calm while smoking.

"How!" he said, presently, and in an affable voice.

Sargent gave a short laugh.

"How!" he said; "but what the dickens——"

The scout waved aside Sargent's remark, pipe in hand, and sent a small curl of smoke after it. Then he began, while Sargent proceeded with his dressing.

"Medicine Pipestem dead," he remarked, impassively.

Sargent wheeled around.

"What! Not the old Blood conjurer?"

Pretty Feathers nodded.

"When did he die?" Sargent was curiously troubled.

"Two—three day after—after magic on reserve."

The Indian's voice sank to an awed whisper.

"Son bad Indian," he went on, meditatively, after an instant's pause. "Painted Snake bad man," he reiterated, between puffs of tobacco smoke.

Sargent examined Pretty Feathers' stolid face carefully in the mirror. He knew enough of Indian character to know that beneath that passive exterior there was some force at work. The conversation was not to be in vain.

"What about Painted Snake?" he asked, carelessly.

"Maybe Painted Snake on war-path," ventured Pretty Feathers, cautiously. "Maybe bad Blood Indians tell Painted Snake *napiake* make Pipestem's medicine bad medicine."

"What makes you think Painted Snake is angry against the *napiake?*" Sargent was shaving himself industriously. He did not wish to appear too interested. The Indian is as timid and cautious as a hare, when not fired by whiskey or blood, and Sargent knew that to arouse Pretty Feathers' alarm was to stop his information.

The Indian shifted himself uneasily on the dry, crackling grass. He liked "Misteh Sargent," and

he did not wish harm to come of Painted Snake's folly. Also, he was out of tobacco and tea, and had no money to bet on the approaching Indian pony races. And then he proceeded to tell, in short, disjointed sentences, with numberless reservations and cautious vaguenesses, what he had heard in the ceaseless ebb and flow of gossip between the Indian tribes. It was not to be denied that after Pipestem's death Painted Snake had fasted long and rigorously, and the white man knew whether or not the Indian was to be feared when he fasted. Also, bad Indians, both Blood and Piegan, had heard him vow vengeance against the *napiake*, who had laughed aloud at his father's magic when all others were stricken dumb with amazement and fear. It was even rumored by certain Indians—but they were liars, and not to be believed on any account—that the Snake had sworn to kill the *napiake* on sight, and then flee over the line to Montana, where the soldiers were weak-hearted and would not dare take him. Also, they hated to oblige the Canadian government. And it was known that Painted Snake had carefully examined a new gun at the great Hud-

son's Bay store at Spitze, though, for his part, Pretty Feathers did not think he had bought it. The white man could do as he chose about believing such unlikely tales.

When he had quite finished, Sargent gave him money, and, throwing himself into a chair by the window, tried to think collectedly about what he had heard. When he raised his head the Indian was gone. He had disappeared as noiselessly and suddenly as he had come. Sargent's thoughts were far from pleasant. He knew to what extremes an Indian crazed by filial grief—for the Indian is filial beyond everything—would go. He knew how the sting of his father's disgrace would rankle in Painted Snake, and, having himself nothing to lose, that self-interest would set no limits to his revenge. Sargent suddenly discovered that he was afraid—afraid for the girl he loved. He had not known before how much he loved her, but now this terrible fear was a good gauge. It tugged at his whole being. Yet while he was afraid, he had never felt more sure of himself or more capable of taking care of her. He was glad of it, for she had no one but

him. Sir Robert's absence made him solely responsible, and it never occurred to him that he could be insufficient for any emergency. He finished dressing and went out to corral the horses.

It was a wild, long ride they had that afternoon. The wind, which always rages during the greater part of the day, died down early, and they rode in peace. Farther and farther across the prairie they went, the ponies going in a long, even canter that was unbroken except when they friskily took a badger or a gopher hole as if it had been a small hurdle. Then they would settle down again to their natural gait, and go unflaggingly and swiftly ahead.

It was an afternoon to be remembered. Across the land the Rockies loomed up snowy-white, save where the sun, as it sank in a fiery splendor, threw rosy shadows upon the mountain sides. Far to the left a thin curl of blue smoke marked where a forest fire burned its way through Crow's Nest Pass. From the swift Kootenai River, a long detour of which they made in their ride, sprang up a cool breeze laden with the scent of the wolf-willow and

the wild rose. Ahead the prairie stretched out illimitably, still green, and broken only by a ridge of low-lying hills and a line of great cotton-woods, that marked a sharp bend inland of the river. On a prairie trees always mean water.

Miss Campbell reined up her pony and sat motionless, looking at the scene before her.

"Oh," she said, softly, "I think this must be the most beautiful view in the world."

She turned her eyes from the gleaming mountains to the prairie, and as her gaze rested on the big cotton-woods and the sweeping turn of the river a puzzled, frightened look crept into her face.

"Why—" she began, and then stopped. She brushed her hand lightly across her eyes and laughed in a troubled fashion, as she turned to Sargent. He was not listening to her, but was looking intently ahead at the line of low hills. Her look followed his, and she could just make out a speck of color that seemed to be moving cautiously toward them among the rank grasses and high bushes at their base. As it at length flashed out upon the open

prairie, Miss Campbell could see distinctly what it was—an Indian rider, whose red shirt was the dot of color. On his head was a gay coronet of porcupine quills, that rippled in the wind as he urged his pony in a mad gallop toward them.

For an instant Sargent looked hard at the approaching horseman. Then he wheeled his pony and touched Miss Campbell's lightly on the flank, so that the little pinto wheeled quickly, too.

"It is Painted Snake. I think we had best run for it," he said, quietly. "If he gets too close, I shall have to leave you and go for him. Don't be afraid. Your pony will carry you home if you give him his head, but I hope to get you across the river first—it's full of logs."

To his surprise the young girl asked no questions, and seemed to know instinctively what to do. There was a strangely calm expression on her face, as though she was neither astonished nor alarmed at what was happening, and she tightened her reins mechanically; but in her eyes there was a curious look. They had several hundred yards' start of the Indian, and Sargent meant to use it to the best ad-

vantage. They had made a long detour of the river in coming. It would save many miles of racing—where the Indian would have all the best of it—if they could cross the river at the big bend by the cotton-wood trees. Once across, Sargent felt reasonably sure that Miss Campbell's pony could get her back to the ranche safely, while he took charge of the Indian.

There was but one difficulty. The Kootenai River, always sufficiently dangerous with its swift current and deep water, was now doubly so from the number of logs that the lumbermen up in the forests were sending down to the mills. The river was one swirling, fighting mass of them. It was hard enough for one quick pony to thread his way among them with the current to fight. It was almost impossible for two to cross together. But it had to be done. Sargent set his lips hard, and mentally swore that it should be done. But it would use up all their advantage to do it. It would take two much longer to get across than one, and Sargent could tell by the way the Indian's pony was going that it was the best of its kind and would probably wriggle

its way through the endless procession of logs as quickly as it could possibly be done.

Their own ponies were going well, though he had grave doubts as to whether Miss Campbell's pinto could keep up the pace and strain very long. The girl's face was pale. She sat very still and let her pony have his head. Both brutes were running evenly and gamely, with the keen wind of their flight singing in their ears. Once Miss Campbell glanced over her shoulder. A ray of sunlight struck the burnished barrel of the Indian's gun. When she turned to Sargent she looked as if she had seen a ghost.

Once, too, Sargent looked back, and he knew that the Indian was gaining steadily on them. The big cotton-woods, which, in that keen, clear air, had looked so near, seemed to recede as they galloped on. A limitless never-ending prairie stretched out before them, and the ponies began to show signs of the strain. Once the pinto broke and Sargent struck him sharply with his quirt. As he did so, Miss Campbell gave a little cry and looked around at Sargent with a scared, white face. And then the

horses plunged forward again, on and on toward the river.

They could hear the rapid rush of the water now and the grinding of the logs as they shoved and pushed their way down the current. As they neared the bank, Sargent leaned over deftly and slipped the buckle of his pony's girth a couple of inches. He did not dare loosen the pinto's, though, while the horses were still running, for fear the side-saddle would turn. But it had to be done. The horses must have plenty of breath for their long swim, so for an instant they drew rein; but it was an instant too long, for above the roar of the water they could hear the fierce yet mellow war-cry of Painted Snake as he gained upon them. There was not a moment to lose, and with one bound Sargent was upon his pony again and they were plunging toward the river.

At the edge they reined their horses in, waiting for a moment when the logs would part a little and let them through. It seemed like madness to try it. The great tree-trunks were coming down in countless numbers, and with a velocity that would

break a pony's legs as though they were of glass. Suddenly the endless rush of the logs seemed to be partly blocked, and for an instant there was a comparatively clear waterway near the shore and out into the middle of the stream. Toward the other bank they were coming down as fiercely as ever, but the opportunity must be seized to get even half across.

Sargent looked at Miss Campbell's white, strained face.

"Don't be afraid!" he said, hurriedly.

"I am not afraid," she said.

Sargent nodded. "That's right!" he said. "We must try it. Now!"

He slipped his right arm around the girl's waist, catching the bridle of her pony firmly in his hand, and suddenly she felt again that ineffable sense of security she had once before felt; and as the horses dashed breast-high into the current, she was faintly aware that she had half risen on her stirrup and was laughing recklessly and happily.

For a while it was easy swimming, and the ponies fought gamely against the swift current, but

half-way across they had more than the current to contend with. From the mass of blocked timber one huge log detached itself and floated down the stream. It came fiercely and broadsides on. Sargent, who was on the up-stream side, wondered if he and his pony could so break the force of the collision as to allow Miss Campbell to escape. He had no thought for himself, but he turned sick at the idea of her trying to get to the shore alone should he be killed or knocked unconscious by the blow. The piece of timber was extremely long, and seemed to stretch half-way to the opposite bank. Sargent mentally calculated that if they could get past it they would be almost to the shore. But it was coming with a fearful velocity, and the ponies were beginning to tire. He called to them and urged them on, but the current, which was bringing down the logs, was swifter than they. He looked at the girl beside him. The puzzled expression had gone out of her eyes, and she was smiling at him confidently and happily. He did not have the heart to say anything to disturb her, and looked away up the stream again.

Suddenly, from a raft of timber on the shore side, Sargent saw another large tree-trunk slash its path out, knocking to right and left the smaller logs in its way, and start, end on, swiftly down the river. The current was hurling it straight toward them and directly in the path of the other piece of timber. In an instant there was a crash, and the great log which had threatened them was spun around and flirted half out of the water on the mid-stream side, while the conqueror floated majestically past them, only just missing the ponies' straining flanks. In a moment more the two brutes were scrambling up the slippery bank, and halted, taking great gasps of breath and shaking their dripping sides.

As they stood thus the fierce yell of the Indian sounded again near and clear. Sargent looked across the stream. On the opposite bank was Painted Snake on his pony, waiting for a chance to swim the river. In an instant it came, and with a wild cry, and brandishing his gun above his head, he plunged into the water. In and out among the crowding logs the lean little Indian pony threaded his way,

now swimming out powerfully to get beyond the reach of some swiftly coming timber, now holding back to let some great log float down stream.

And as the Indian came nearer and nearer, Sargent urged and pleaded with Miss Campbell to set out as swiftly as possible for the ranche. He would stay and try conclusions with Painted Snake, for the horses were utterly used up and incapable of further racing. But the young girl refused to go. She would stay with him, she said. Nothing he could say would make her change her decision. And Sargent, suddenly happier than he had ever been in his life, ceased his persuasions and arguments, and together they watched the pony and his rider come toward them.

The river was almost impassable now, for the great raft of logs which had been blocked in midstream had broken loose, and the timber was crowding down endlessly and fiercely. In and out among them swam the pony, the Indian yelling fiercely, and holding aloft his gun that it might not touch the water. He was so close that Sargent could see

the pallor and wildness of his face. He looked like some maddened lunatic, with the hideous painted serpent on his forehead, above which nodded the scarlet porcupine quills. Suddenly in mid-stream a log, which had been floating with a whole convoy of others, parted from them, and bore straight down upon the Indian. The pony made one valiant lunge forward, but the log hit him full on the flanks, and, being forced upward, sent the gun, which Painted Snake was carrying across his shoulder, spinning into the water. With a wild cry the Indian slid off his sinking horse and dove for the gun. As he rose with it, and lifted his head to shake the water from his eyes and mouth, the log, which had careened around, bore down upon him again, and hit him at the base of the skull. It must have crushed it, and, without a moan, Painted Snake sank as if he had been shot.

For several minutes the two watched with straining eyes the spot where the swarthy head with its scarlet coronet had gone down and then, as it did not reappear, Miss Campbell, uttering a little cry, reeled forward in her saddle. Again Sargent's arm

went protectingly about her, but this time his hand did not grasp the bridle, but clasped hers firmly, and drawing her white face down upon his shoulder, he dared to kiss it tenderly.

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